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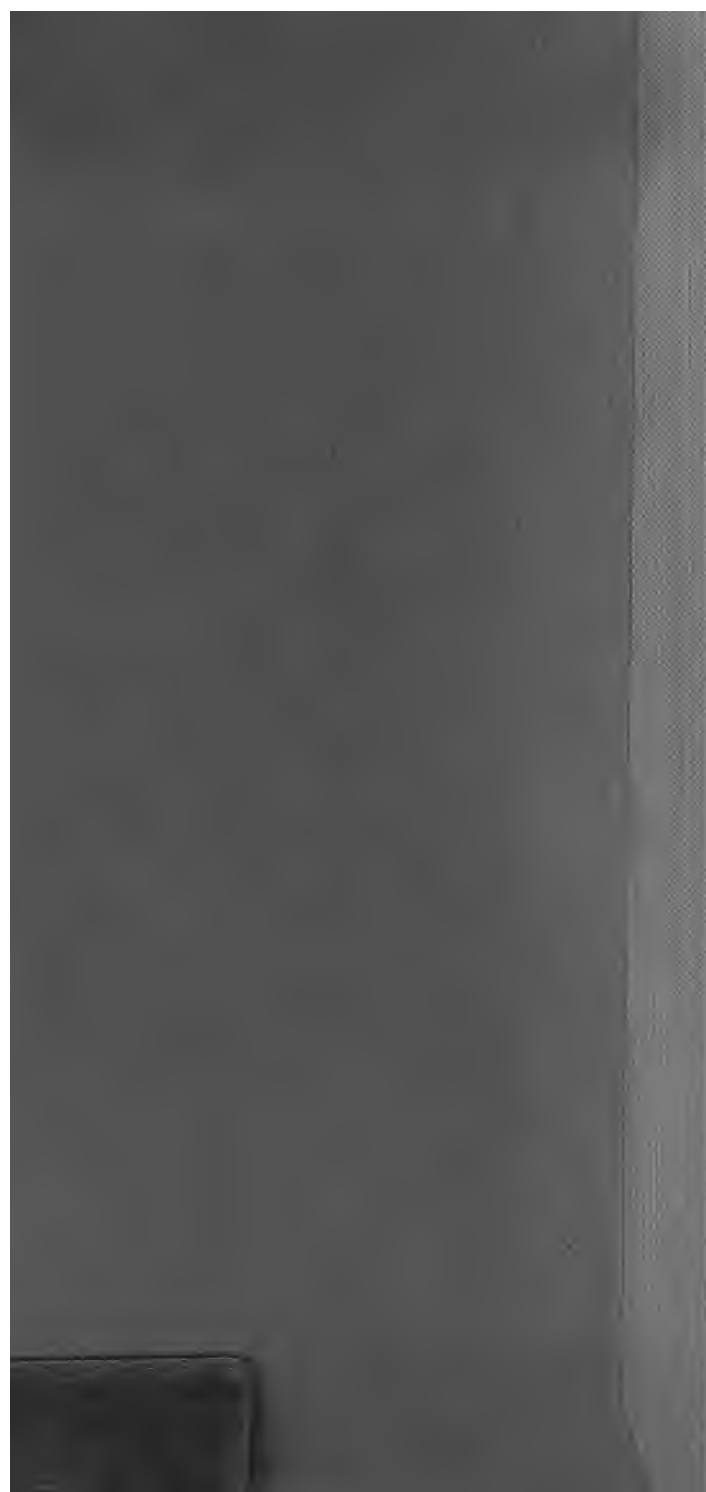
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HISTORY
OF
DISSENTERS,

FROM THE
REVOLUTION

IN 1688, TO THE YEAR 1808.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY
DAVID BOGUE & JAMES BENNETT.

VOL. III.

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1810.



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HISTORY OF DISSENTERS.

SECOND PERIOD.

*From the Death of Queen Anne to the Accession of
George the Third.*

CHAP. I.

AN ACCOUNT OF NEW SECTS OF DISSENTERS FROM
THE ESTABLISHMENT, WHICH AROSE DURING
THIS PERIOD, THEIR DISTINGUISHING TENETS
AND THE OUTLINES OF THEIR HISTORY.

SECTION I. RISE OF THE METHODISTS.

THIS name, which was originally given in derision, has had the singular fortune of being esteemed a golden apple, for which two opposite sects have long struggled, each of them claiming as their own, what both would at first have spurned as a nick-name; while it has also been applied to others, who, forming no separate communion, have gone as far as conscience would permit in high-church principles, to escape the sectarian appellation. Such is the folly of attempting to put religion out of countenance with odious epithets; for if they never become current, they fall harmless, as an arrow which has missed its

aim; and if ever they give a name to the communion, they lose all their original venom, and acquire as much respectability as is deserved by the sect, which soon learns to glory in the denomination affixed to that party with which they think truth and religion dwell.

It has been generally taken for granted that the origin of the word methodist, as the name of a religious sect, was at Oxford. The founders of this communion, being students at the university in that city, joined together in exercises of devotion, and in frequent communion, for which they were ridiculed by the Oxonians, at first, under the name of the sacramentarians, and the holy or godly club. But a fellow of Merton college, observing the regular method in which they divided their time between their devotions, their studies, and their rest, said, "here is a new sect of methodists sprung up, alluding to an eminent college of physicians at Rome, who were called Methodistæ, for putting their patients under a peculiar regimen^a." But there was a party in the church of Rome called methodists, from the peculiar method which they adopted in the controversy with the protestants^b. It is, however, not generally known that the name of methodist had been given long before, to a religious sect in England, or at least to a party in religion, which was distinguished by some of the same marks as are now supposed to apply to the methodists. John Spencer, who was librarian of Sion college in the year one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, during the protectorate of

^a Wesley's Journals, vol. I. preface, p. 10. Ainsworth calls them Methodici.

^b Mosheim Eccles. Hist. 17th. cent. sect. ii. p. 1.

Oliver Cromwell, in a book which he published, consisting of extracts from various authors, speaks of the eloquence and elegance of the sacred Scriptures, and asks "where are now our anabaptists and plain pack-staff methodists, who esteem all flowers of rhetoric in sermons, no better than stinking weeds?" By the anabaptists, we know that he means a denomination of Christians, which still exists; and though we have not at this time, any particular account of the methodists of that day, the ecclesiastical wasp, Thomas Edwards, in his *Gangræna* enumerates many sects, some of which we admit were only local nick-names of the principal communions, but others may have been ephemeral sects, the produce of that fertile period, of whom we have no history because they had no duration. Among these, there seem to have been some, who were called methodists, who distinguished themselves by plainness of speech, rejecting the aids of literature and the ornaments of eloquence in their public sermons. This might have been known to the fellow of Merton, who has the honour of reviving this name, and giving it to the modern sect.

The present methodists, however, sprang from Oxford, which has thus atoned for the guilt of cherishing high-church prejudices and monkish bigotry (while her sister, Cambridge, with all the rest of the kingdom, was rubbing off the corrosive rust), by giving birth to sons who have enlisted thousands in the ranks of dissent, and have reduced the crest of priesthood lower than ever it had fallen before. It is, indeed, a curious circumstance, that at a time when the peace of the grave reigned there, and from a fellow

^c Spencer's *Things new and old*, p. 161, anno 1658.

of the university, who had imbibed the true Oxonian abhorrence for sectarianism, should arise the sect, which has carried the ministrations of unordained laymen, to their utmost lengths.

The irreligion and infidelity of the nation had, however, extended to such a dreadful degree when the methodists first appeared, that it was high time some should arise to stem the torrent. Bishop Butler prefaces his analogy, written about this time, by lamenting that it was then "taken for granted that Christianity was not so much as a subject of inquiry, and accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world^d." At this gloomy period, the sovereign Head of the church interposed, and out of the establishment, which had been left a barren desert, during the seventy years which had elapsed since the ejection of the two thousand nonconformists, he raised up a host of faithful men, for whose labours "the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom like the rose."

Mr. John Wesley, a student of Christ church, being elected fellow of Lincoln college, seized that opportunity to shake off his old companions, who had been a snare to him; and being deeply affected with the prospect of eternity, he new modelled his life, regulated his studies, and chose his future companions with a view to his religious improvement. As he was designed for the ministry, he was ordained,

^d Butler's Analogy, Advertisement.

in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-five, by Dr. Potter, who was afterwards archbishop of Canterbury. In his office of tutor in Lincoln college, he laboured to form the young men to a just sense of the importance of religion; and some of them, who afterwards seriously differed from him in sentiment, ever gratefully acknowledged the advantages which they had derived from his attentions. While this solicitude for the salvation of the soul, was yet fresh in Mr. Wesley's mind, a serious man whom he had travelled many miles to see, said to him, "sir, you wish to serve God, and to go to heaven, remember you cannot serve him alone. You must, therefore, find companions, or make them: the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." It has been observed, that a sentiment boldly conceived, and happily expressed, may overturn an empire. This sentiment, so just in itself, and so happy in the delivery, though intended only to benefit an individual, has created not merely a religious sect, but several hosts, which have given to the moral world an impulse, that has been felt to the antipodes. Mr. Wesley, who was ever alive to first impressions, never afterwards forgot this remark, and immediately on his return to college, began to act upon it, by communicating his views to his junior brother, Charles, who was then a student at Christ church. They soon after associated themselves with Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton college. When this little band first began to meet, in the month of November, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-nine, they read divinity only on Sunday evenings, and on the other six, the Greek and Latin classics; but as they advanced, they became more decidedly a

religious party, reading the Greek testament instead of the heathen writers, and conversing on the most important topics in theology. It soon appeared to them necessary to keep the fasts of the church of England, besides their constant abstinence on Wednesdays and Fridays : they received also the Lord's supper every week, visited the prisoners in the castle, and the sick poor in the town. " We were now," says Mr. Wesley, " fifteen in number, and of one heart and mind." Their scheme for self-examination, at this time, indicates the mystical turn of mind with which they were feeling their way to heaven. . They interrogate themselves, whether they have been *simple* and recollected ; whether they have prayed with fervour, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and on Saturday noon ; if they have used a collect at nine, twelve, and three o'clock ; duly meditated on Sunday, from three to four, on Thomas à Kempis ; or mused on Wednesday and Friday, from twelve to one, on the passion." One is almost disposed to regret that there was no vacant monastery of La Trappe, into which these monkish protestants might at this time have retired for their devotions, at canonical hours.

In the second year, after the formation of this society, it was joined by several of the pupils of Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, in two years after, by Mr. Ingham of Queen's college, Mr. Broughton of Exeter, and Mr. James Hervey, who afterwards became celebrated for his meditations. But their grand acquisition was in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-four, when Mr George Whitfield, who was then a youth of about nineteen, joined himself to the society, of which he was destined to be the great Apollos. As he gave himself heartily into the serious

views of the methodists, while his mind was yet unilluminated with evangelical knowledge, he practised such ascetic austerities as reduced him to extreme debility, and which he would probably have increased till they had produced melancholy, or madness, by shutting himself up from all society, a measure which he deemed necessary for the purification of his nature. But, in this state of mind, he was relieved by the kind attentions of Mr. Charles Wesley, who recommended him to the society of more experienced Christians, whose conversation, with the judicious application of medicines, healed both body and mind; so that from this time, he was seen rejoicing in the glad tidings of salvation by Christ. The value which this little band put upon each other's fellowship, may be seen by a letter which Mr. John Wesley wrote to justify his refusal of the benefice, which his father held, and in which he was invited to succeed him. "The first of these means of holiness, which I enjoy at Oxford, is daily converse with my friends. I know no other place under heaven, where I can have always at hand half a dozen persons, nearly of my own judgment, and engaged in the same studies; persons who are awakened to a full and lively conviction, that they have only one work to do upon earth, and who are in some measure enlightened so as to see, though at a distance, what that work is, *viz.* the recovery of that single intention and pure affection which were in Christ Jesus, and who, in order to this, have, according to their power, renounced themselves, and wholly and absolutely devoted themselves to God, and who, suitably thereto, deny themselves, and take up their cross daily."

* Coke's Life of Wesley, p. 75.

The mystical tinge of this passage, and the total absence of all regard to what Christ has done for us, as well as the apparent ignorance of that divine influence, which must put us in possession of the blessings of his redemption, will not appear wonderful, when it is known that the two Wesleys, during the latter part of their stay at Oxford, maintained a close intimacy with the celebrated mystic Law, the author of Christian Perfection, and the Call to a devout and holy Life. Two or three times in a year, these young seekers travelled about sixty miles (on foot, that they might save their money for the poor), to visit this oracle, and listen to its responses. At one time, Mr. Law said to John Wesley, "you would have a philosophical religion, but there can be no such thing. Religion is the most simple thing, it is only, we love him because he first loved us." With an affectation of luminous simplicity, this dictatorial sentence is as ambiguous as any response which was ever delivered from the delphic tripod: for the text of Scripture, as it is here quoted, may signify two opposite sentiments; either that our only motive for loving God is, because he loved us, which is the selfishness of arminianism; or that the true reason, why we are brought to love God is, because he, in love for us, gave the disposition, which is the humble and generous acknowledgment of calvinism. But these young methodists were not sufficiently acute divines to see through the the amphibologies of their oracle. It was, however, a melancholy circumstance, that, looking around them on every hand for tutors and guides in the way to heaven, writing and travelling to those who were most famed for theological eminence, they could discover no better luminary than this ignis fatuus.

If such was the light, what must the darkness have been? What Mr. Wesley himself afterwards thought of the system which he then adopted, the reader may judge from his own words. "In this refined way of trusting to my own works, and my own righteousness, by pursuing inward holiness, or an union of soul with God, so zealously inculcated by the mystic writers, whom I declare in my cool judgment, and in the presence of the most high God, I believe to be one great antichrist, I dragged on heavily till the time of leaving England." Yet, as Horace observes, that the cask long retains a smatch of the liquor with which it was first imbued; so it has been deplored that Mr. Wesley's religion was not thoroughly purged from the leaven of this great antichrist all his days. Pursuing, however, this mistaken course with great diligence, their economy and self-denial enabled them to devote eighty pounds per annum to charitable objects, and their zeal urged them to invent various schemes of usefulness. This roused the true Oxonian spirit to fierce opposition. It was reported, that the college censors, were going to blow up the godly club; and a gentleman, whom Mr. Wesley pronounces famed for piety, seized his nephew by the throat to compel him to desist from weekly communion. Lying fame used all her mouths to spread abroad evil reports, which compelled John Wesley to write to his elder brother Samuel, a clergyman at Westminster, to remove the unfavourable impressions which he had received concerning the methodists. But as Samuel seems to have been a worldly priest, who hated all pretence to more religion than our neighbours, as an infallible mark of a dissenter, the

^f Wesley's Journals, vol. I. p. 27.

correspondence, between the two brothers, left each of them confirmed in his first impressions. Mr. Wesley's father, however, approved of the conduct of his methodistical sons, and the bishop of Oxford sanctioned their visits to the prisoners at the castle.

But about the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-five, their societies at Oxford were broken up; for John and Charles Wesley, Mr. Ingham, and Mr. Delamotte, the son of a merchant in London, in the October of that year, embarked for Georgia, in America. It may be enquired, how Mr. Wesley, who had obstinately refused his father's living of Epworth, that he might enjoy the society at Oxford, should forsake this beloved spot for a desert. William Law and the mystics had crazed him with the imagination, that he was literally to go forth into the wilderness to follow Christ; though Jesus himself had warned him that if they should say, "lo! Christ is in the desert go not forth." "Our end in leaving our native country," says Mr. Wesley, "was not to avoid want, God having given us plenty of temporal blessings, nor to gain the dung and dross of riches and honour, but singly this, to save our souls, and to live wholly to the glory of God." The ignorance of religion, betrayed in this account of their object, would lead us to augur ill of the success of their mission; and accordingly it seems to have produced no other effect than, as Mr. Wesley says, that of leading him into the desert to be tempted and humbled, and shewn what was in his heart. O that it had effectually accomplished the object! This would have made ample atonement for every other failure.

The circumstance, which opened the way for the operation of these ascetic views, was the death of his

father, in the spring of the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-five, which called him to London, where he met with Dr. Burton; one of the trustees for the new colony of Georgia, who requested him to go thither to preach to the Indians. Mr. Wesley having consulted his mother, she gave her consent in language which spoke her a genuine daughter of an old puritan: "had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more." During the voyage, the company of missionaries employed their time with scrupulous exactness and laborious diligence, in acts of devotion, in the study of the Scriptures, and in the instruction of those who were willing to learn. But if we judge of their instruction from a hint which Mr. Wesley gives, it was the blind conducting the foolish. "A woman desired to receive the sacrament, but I thought it necessary, to instruct her first in the nature of Christianity, and therefore read to her every day out of Mr. Law's Christian Perfection." Thus he instructed her in the nature of Christianity, by the lessons of one of those whom he himself afterwards pronounced the great antichrist. For the best intentions, without just principles, only make a man industriously wrong.

There were, however, on board the vessel, several Germans who were missionaries from the Moravian brethren, and in these Mr. Wesley saw a meekness, purity, and benevolence, an air of heartfelt satisfaction and joy, a superiority to the ills of life, and a victory over the fears of death, to which he was conscious he had never attained. The storms, which shook him with dread of eternity, only filled them with joy in the prospect of speedily beholding the unveiled face of a reconciled God, and thus displayed

the vast, essential difference between their religion and that of a man whose zeal and self-denial had led him across the Atlantic, to exchange the comforts of England for the horrors of a desert, in the vain hope of procuring that acceptance with God by his own performances, which they had obtained "by faith in him who justifieth the ungodly." Hence, even his biographers who, attached to his communion, were ardent admirers of their leader, acknowledge that, "though he gave all his goods to feed the poor, and sacrificed ease, and honour, and every other temporal gratification to follow Christ, yet it is certain that he was very little acquainted with true experimental religion. This the Lord began now to shew him, first, by the fear of death, which notwithstanding all his efforts, brought him into bondage, whenever danger was apparent, which made him say, I plainly felt I was unfit, because I was unwilling to die; secondly, the lively victorious faith he evidently perceived in his fellow passengers, the moravians, still more convinced him that he possessed not the power of religion^t." Yet these biographers, with a strange confusion of ideas, and perversion of language, speak of him at this time, as having a single eye, as being a man of God, as entitled to the regards due to a minister of Christ, while he was, as Paul describes the Jews, ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own, and not submitting himself to the righteousness of God; so that he was at enmity with God, under his wrath, and destitute of true virtue or holiness, which is the inseparable companion of the faith of God's elect. The very passage of Scripture, to which the authors of Mr.

^t Coke and Moore's life, p. 97.

Wesley's life allude, expressly declares that, notwithstanding all his splendid shew of zeal and benevolence, not having the genuine charity, which springs from belief and love of the truth, he was, in God's esteem, nothing.

Though it may astonish many, that such a man should undertake such a mission, it can excite no surprize in the breast of any real Christian, that the mission should prove abortive. The Indians were the intended objects of Mr. Wesley's ministry, but he found no opportunity of going among them; for general Oglethorp, the governor of the colony, wished to detain him in spite of himself, at Savannah, where the English had formed their settlement. Here, however, he soon became an unwelcome guest. Several persons disliked his rigid attachment to all parts of the rubric of the church of England. "High church principles, as they are called; continually influenced his conduct: an instance of which was his refusing to admit one of the holiest men in the province to the Lord's-supper (though he earnestly desired it) because he was a dissenter, unless he would submit to be re-baptized." When high church principles had afterwards tortured him and his friends, till they were sore, he remarks, "have I not been finely beaten with my own staff^h?" It seems, however, that the blows of this iron crosier are more severe than salutary, that it is only a rod of persecution and not of correction; for he that was finely beaten for his fault was never beaten out of it. While this has appeared to some a venial error, or even a laudable adherence to what he judged to be duty, it was inexcusable; for he professed to be then con-

^h Life, p. 112.

vinced by the Moravians, that he was destitute of real religion, of which he saw incontestible evidences in persons of other communions. Was such a man entitled to indulgence in the rash sectarian spirit, which unchristianised those who did not see with his eyes, and drove from his altars all who would not adopt his shibboleth, and be baptized into his sect? The esteem which he professed to feel for the Moravians, who were of a different communion, aggravated the sin and folly of his bigotry towards others, who evidently offended him because they were too near neighbours, and therefore rivals; while his love for German dissenters was as certainly not divine charity or affection for true holiness, which, it is confessed, shone conspicuously in the dissenter, whom he repelled from the table of the Lord. Nor was there in this haughty, high-church priest any mark of that sincere humility which his communion is fond of laying down as the distinguishing sign of those who are seeking the truth. He was, however, not the first who had driven from the communion of the church, men who were afterwards discovered to be possessed of the true spirit of religion, of which their despisers were destitute.

That the stern, contracted bigotry which he displayed, accompanied with sermons which inculcated the mortifications of the ascetics, instead of proclaiming the exhilarating tidings of the Gospel, should alienate the hearts of the Anglo-Georgians from Mr. Wesley, cannot be deemed wonderful. He was indeed esteemed an Ishmael; for his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. Only among the Moravians, he found Christian refuge and consolation. But the immediate cause of his leaving Ame-

rica has, for a long time, lain under a suspicious veil, which, till of late, has not been lifted up by his friends. The governor, perceiving in Mr. Wesley an unusual energy of character, studied to decoy him from the heights of mysticism to the level which would render him a convenient instrument to execute the schemes which the general had formed. For this, he sagaciously selected one of the daughters of Eve, whose charms had nearly succeeded. But on consulting with the Moravians whether it would be expedient for him to marry Miss Causton, the governor's niece, they forbade the banns, and Mr. Wesley very narrowly escaped the snare. The lady afterwards betrayed the deep hatred of despised beauty, and proved a persecutor of her former lover, who, after having been pursued by a malicious law-suit, judged it proper to leave America, where all his success seemed to consist in enlarging his own knowledge of mankind and of himself. Thus unpropitious was the first mission of the methodists to that part of the globe, where they were destined afterwards to reap such large harvests.

During all this time, the cause of methodism was rising to unparalleled popularity in England, by the zeal and eloquence of Mr. Whitfield. When the first societies broke up from Oxford, he went to Gloucester for the benefit of his native air; for the mistaken austerities which he had practised, had so reduced him that he was scarcely able to walk. But it pleased the God of all grace to reveal to him the way of salvation by faith; so that, while Mr. Wesley was discovering that he had no religion, his younger companion was rejoicing in the power and riches and sovereignty of divine grace. He now improved the peaceful and happy state of his mind, by devoting

himself to the study of the sacred Scriptures, in which, under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, he made eminent advancement. His heart, expanded by the joys of reconciliation to God, loved to tell of the divine goodness; for which purpose he formed a little society in his native place, and braved the reproach, which he knew would be heaped upon them, for forming what would be called conventicles. He read to a few poor people several times a week, and visited and prayed with the prisoners in Gloucester jail.

Being now about one and twenty years of age, Mr. Whitfield was informed by Dr. Benson, bishop of Gloucester, that although he had resolved to ordain none under three and twenty, he should reckon it his duty to ordain him whenever he should choose to apply. With this view, the young evangelist began to study, with great seriousness, the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, to know whether he approved of them or not; in which if he had more imitators, the establishment would have fewer ordained contradictors of her articles. But we do not find that he studied the common prayer-book, which is usually taken for granted, as a second volume of the Bible, but to which it would not be found so easy to subscribe after diligent study as before. Mr. Whitfield, indeed, perused the epistles of Paul, to know whether he possessed the qualifications of a Christian bishop, and was at length ordained at Gloucester, Sunday, June the twentieth, in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-six, and on the following Lord's-day preached his sermon "on the necessity and benefit of religious society." "Curiosity," says he, "drew a large congregation together. The sight at first a little awed me. But I was comforted with

heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the advantage of public speaking, when a boy at school, and of exhorting and teaching the prisoners, and poor people at their private houses, whilst at the university. By these means, I was kept from being daunted. As I proceeded, I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of authority. Some few mocked, but most for the present seemed struck, and I have since heard, that a complaint was made to the bishop, that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon. The worthy prelate, wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday¹.

Whitfield shortly after removed to Oxford, and from thence to London, where his first sermon, at Bishopgate-church, fixed the attention and excited the serious surprise of those who seemed disposed to sneer at his boyish looks. But his principal field of labour, in London, was at the chapel in the Tower, where he took great pains with the soldiers, and drew vast numbers of serious young men to his sermons, on the morning of the Lord's-day. He returned again to Oxford for a time, and resumed his studies, with a peculiar view to the grand duty of preaching the Gospel; for which his early attempts had just served to convince him of the necessity of diligent preparation. Matthew Henry's commentary on the Scriptures was the book from which he derived that knowledge of scriptural theology, that serious evangelical train of thinking, and that simple popular mode of instruction for which he afterwards became so deservedly renowned. He

¹ Whitfield's letter, Gillies Life, p. 10.

is said to have studied this book literally on his knees, to have read it through four times, and to the end of his life, to have spoken of the author with the most profound veneration, ever calling him the great Mr. Henry. Had Mr. Wesley's prejudices allowed him to study the works of this dissenter, instead of the writings of the mystical Law, how much benefit might he have derived to his own religion, and how happily might it have influenced the principles of the communion which he formed out of the establishment !

Mr. Whitfield afterwards went to preach at Dummer, in Hampshire, but being invited by the Wesleys and their friends in Georgia, to come over to their help, he went to London to wait on general Oglethorp, During this visit to the metropolis, he frequently preached to the most numerous assemblies ; for the hearers hung on the rails outside the parish churches, climbed on the leads, and still multitudes went away unable to get near enough to hear at all. These were new scenes to the members of the church of England ; for since the days when Baxter, Vincent, and some others of the puritans filled the parish churches, they had seldom been troubled with excessive popularity. But now the managers of all the charities in London invited Whitfield to preach for them, and replenish their exhausted coffers. Though he generally preached four times on the Lord's-day, he could not comply with all their invitations, without procuring the use of the churches on the working days. Nine times a week, he preached and administered the Lord's-supper, in the morning, before it was light, when the streets were seen illuminated with lanterns. He was invited to accept of a very lucrative curacy in London, but

he refused it, in order to go and preach to the ignorant inhabitants of Georgia. It speaks highly in praise of his superior character and strength of religious principle, that while in the ardour of youth, when such unexampled popularity as he enjoyed is peculiarly intoxicating, he should resolve to tear himself from London, and refused an offer which he might easily have persuaded himself was a field of usefulness superior to the desarts of America. But having determined on his departure, he visited first his native place, and from thence made a tour to Bath and Bristol, attracting by his popular preaching immense numbers in every place, where many were roused to a serious solicitude for their eternal happiness.

As might be expected, such popularity and zeal provoked envy, and kindled opposition. Two clergymen sent for him and told him he must not preach for them any more, unless he would recall a part of the preface to a sermon which he had lately published on regeneration. The obnoxious sentence expressed a wish that his brethren would entertain their auditories oftener with discourses on the new-birth. Those gentlemen must have been excessively delicate, who could not bear a hint so gentle. If they objected to the doctrine of the new-birth, they should have insisted on his renouncing it, as contrary to the principles of their church, for which they would have found more specious arguments than for opposition to any other doctrine of the Gospel; for it may be questioned, whether the church of England in her formularies teaches any other than the unscriptural notion of baptismal regeneration. But, if the clergy approved of the doctrine as Mr. Whitfield preached it, surely he might be allowed to express, in decent

language, a wish that it were more frequently taught. But the secret thorn which produced the festering wound in the minds of the clergy, was the observation that the dissenters flocked to church to hear Mr. Whitfield, and that he went, when invited, to the houses of schismatics. Some of them told this zealous churchman, that if the doctrine of the new-birth and justification by faith, were preached powerfully in the established church, there would be no dissenters in England. Those who made this assertion were probably, dissenters from the preaching, but not from the principles of the establishment ; for they were evidently not aware of a fact which has been proved, since evangelical preachers have increased in the church of England, that there are multitudes, who are so deeply convinced that the whole constitution of the hierarchy is unscriptural in its principles, and pernicious in its tendency, that no preacher could allure them into its communion.

Mr. Whitfield parted with his London friends, amidst many prayers and tears, and embarked for Georgia, about the commencement of the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight. On the voyage he endured much distress from the profligate spirit and conduct of the crew, but was shortly delighted with the change which his presence and counsels produced in their behaviour. They touched at Gibraltar, to take in troops, and this indefatigable missionary seized the opportunity of preaching frequently in the garrison. The subsequent half of their voyage from Gibraltar to America was a delightful contrast of the former part, and affords us a curious picture of methodism on the bosom of the barren deep. " They were now as regular as a church. Mr.

Whitfield preached, with a captain on each side of him, and soldiers all around; and the two other ships' companies, being now in the trade winds, drew near and joined in the worship of God. The great cabin was become a Bethel, both captains were daily more and more affected; and a crucified Saviour, and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were the usual topics of their conversation. The children were catechised, the soldiers were reformed, and the women exclaimed, "what a change in our captain." The bad books and packs of cards, which Mr. Whitfield had exchanged for bibles and religious publications, were thrown overboard, and a fever which prevailed on board, added considerably to the general impressions of eternity^k.

The cause of methodism, which Mr. Wesley had left in a dying state, was revived by the arrival of his more popular successor. On taking an attentive survey of the civil and moral condition of Georgia, Mr. Whitfield determined on founding an orphan hospital, in imitation of the one which professor Frank had established at Halle, in Saxony, of which Mr. Whitfield had read with exquisite satisfaction. But he afterwards confessed he was deceived, by not considering that the German institution was established in a cultivated populous country, and "this at the tail of the world," where it was deprived of every resource. Hence, the well meant institution involved him in excessive expences, which perplexed his mind and exposed him to severe reflections; from those who were so ignorant as not to know what such a large establishment must cost in a new colony, and so malevolent as to insinuate that he consumed upon

^k Life, p. 22.

himself the liberal contributions of the public. It would, indeed, have been far more prudent to have abandoned the scheme as soon as its impracticability became apparent ; but perseverance was the characteristic of the man, and this, in particular instances, is liable to degenerate into obstinacy, which led Mr. Whitfield to expend upon his favourite project much more than it deserved. It was, perhaps, wisely ordered, to furnish him with a counterpoise to his dangerous popularity, and to shew the world that all he was, he was by sovereign grace ; for that, in a certain part, he was as weak as other men. Thus, while he was preserved from the pride to which he was most exposed, and which would have completely spoiled his character, his admirers were kept from that idolatry, which would have entirely perverted the design of God in elevating him to so much excellence and usefulness. This scheme drew him, also, into New England, where he not only collected money for the hospital, but enlarged his own knowledge of theology, by an acquaintance with a class of Christians to whom he afterwards owed much ; and as America could never furnish sufficient donations for the charitable establishment, he was induced to travel over a great part of England, to solicit further aid ; so that the desert to which he retreated was the means of introducing him into unbounded popularity.

On his first return to England, to receive priestly orders, and to collect for the orphan house, the clergy received him with coldness, but the people welcomed him with extravagant applause. From five of the pulpits in which he had been accustomed to preach, he was now excluded ; and the bishop of London asked him, whether his journals, which had

been published, were not a little tinged with enthusiasm? He replied, that they were written entirely for private use, and published without his consent; and he afterwards confessed that he had written his journals too hastily, and taken up ill reports concerning good men, especially the colleges and ministers of New England. For this youthful fault he afterwards, with a frank ingenuous spirit, begged pardon, both in the pulpit and in the press.

The societies for reformation of manners, which have already been noticed, being considered the soul of the national establishment, to which it owed all its credit for serious regard to religion or morals, were much respected by Mr. Whitfield, at the commencement of his popularity in London, and were helpful to him in promoting various schemes with which his generous heart always teemed. But on his return from America, they discovered as much enmity to him as the most profligate men of the world; so that his friends were induced to form other societies, which were composed of those who wished for more than mere reformation of manners. They hired a large room in Fetter-lane, where they frequently met, and enjoyed the highest delight in religious exercises, which they considered purely as social helps to religion; not at all suspecting that they would lead to the establishment of congregations and sects separate from the national church. Thus originated the term *society*, which still prevails among the methodists, and in the same way may be understood the phrase of the societies' rooms, which so frequently occurs in the journals of Wesley and Whitfield.

The formation of a new sect was daily becoming more inevitable; for Mr. Whitfield was excluded from

most of the parochial pulpits. After having received priests orders from bishop Benson, at Oxford, and taken a journey to Bristol to collect for the orphans in Georgia, he found himself compelled to adopt some new method to prevent his usefulness from being totally annihilated. "I thought, says he, it might be doing the service of my Creator, who had a mountain for his pulpit, and the heavens for his sounding-board, and who, when his Gospel was refused by the Jews, sent his servants into the highways and hedges¹." He had often heard that the colliers in the vicinity of Bristol were a numerous race of barbarians, who had no place of worship, and were so wild that no one chose to venture among them; for often, when provoked, they were the terror of the whole city of Bristol. After much prayer, and such mental conflicts, as can be conceived by those only who have devised new and daring efforts in the cause of religion, he one day went to Hannam Mount, and preached to about a hundred colliers, from the first verses of Christ's sermon on the mount. The news flew so swiftly, that the second and third time of his preaching out of doors, the numbers greatly increased, till the congregation, was computed at near twenty thousand. Many of these despised outcasts, who had never been in a place of worship in their lives, received the Gospel with an eager gladness, which defies all description.

The first discovery of their being affected, says Mr. Whitfield, "was by seeing the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal pits. Several hundreds of them were soon brought under

¹ Life, p. 37.

deep convictions, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to any thing rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, and I had just begun to be an extemporary preacher, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not, in my own apprehension, a word to say. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) so assisted, that I knew, by happy experience, what our Lord meant by saying, 'he that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.' The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in trees, and at times all affected and drenched in tears together; to which, sometimes, was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, was almost too much for and quite overcame me^m."

Many of the higher ranks went out of Bristol to hear him, and then invited him to preach in an unconsecrated spot in the city, under the blue vault of the heavens. From Bristol he went into Wales, where a similar revival of religion had commenced some years before, under the ministry of the Rev. Griffith Jones, and was now carried on by means of Howel Harris, a layman. To employ laymen to preach was yet far from the thoughts of even the methodists; but when Mr. Whitfield visited many of the towns in Wales, he cordially united with a man whom God had honoured to build up his kingdom, though no episcopal hand had communicated an undefined, invis-

^m Life, p. 58.

ble, indelible something. To the multitudes who flocked to hear in every place, Mr. Whitfield first preached in English, and Mr. Harris afterwards in Welsh. Mr. Whitfield went from Wales to Gloucester, the place of his birth; and after preaching once or twice, the established pulpit was shut against him, when he again went abroad and preached to thousands. The same scenes followed his arrival at all the principal places in that country. "To wander thus about from place to place, to stand in bowling-greens, at market-crosses, and in highways, especially in his own country, where, had he conferred with flesh and blood, he might have lived at ease; to be blamed by friends, and have every evil thing spoken against him by his enemies, was, especially when his body was weak and his spirits low, very trying^a."

After a short visit to the methodists at Oxford, the cradle of the cause, he went to London, and attempted to preach at Islington church, as Mr. Stonehouse, the incumbent, was a friend to the rising communion; but in the midst of the prayers, the churchwarden came and demanded his license, forbidding him to preach unless he produced it. He went out, therefore, after the communion service, and preached in the church-yard. On the following Sunday, having reflected on the mighty blessings which had been produced by his being driven to preach out of doors, he improved his exclusion from every pulpit, by going into Moorfields, and commencing that scene of labour and success, which has since been so renowned. The public notice for this new and singular measure, drew incredible numbers, which struck him with astonishment on stepping out of the coach. He

^a Life, p. 41.

Had been threatened that if he attempted to preach there, he should not come away alive. But, though his friends were soon parted from him by the violent pressure, the mob, over whom he acquired such an ascendancy as to be a sort of favourite with them, formed a lane for him; and when the table, on which he was to have mounted, was dashed in pieces, he ascended a wall, and preached to the listening myriads. The same evening he went to Kennington common, a short distance from London, and preached to still greater crowds, who were as silent and orderly as if they had been in a place of worship. "Words cannot express," says Whitfield, "the displays of divine grace, which we saw, and heard of, and felt." Blackheath was afterwards added to these methodistically consecrated spots, where from twenty to thirty thousand are said to have assembled, whose voices in singing could be heard two miles off, and Mr. Whitfield's voice nearly a mile."

When this novel and surprising scene commenced in England and Wales, Mr. Wesley was travelling in Germany, for a reason which many will deem sufficiently strange and romantic: he went to see the place where the Christians live. On his return from Georgia, the leisure and quiet of the voyage afforded him an opportunity of reflecting on his own state, the result of which he thus expresses. "It is now two years and almost four months, since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why (what I least of all suspected) that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. I am

* Life, p. 43.

not mad though I thus speak^p." Without disputing the truth of the conclusion, the validity of the evidence may not only be questioned, but absolutely denied; for Mr. Wesley pronounces himself unconverted, "because he had not that faith, which consists in a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God." His biographers call these the words of the church of England. Whether they are or not, is of small consequence to dissenters, but that they are neither the words nor sentiments of the sacred Scriptures is both certain and important. The faith of the Gospel, which brings salvation, consists in believing a truth, which remains eternally the same, whether we receive or reject it, "that there is eternal life in Christ the Son of God:" but this kind of faith, of which Mr. Wesley speaks, consists in believing a something which is not true, till it is believed—that a man's sins are forgiven. That a genuine faith produces an assurance of our being reconciled to God is admitted; but this assurance is essentially distinct from the faith by which it is produced, and no one can affirm that the man has never believed who has not a sure confidence that his sins are forgiven. But Mr. Wesley, at this time, united with the most positive assertions, the strongest evidences of a mind darkened and confused with mysticism, and grossly ignorant of all the important distinctions in true scriptural theology.

Shortly after his arrival in England, he met with a new band of Moravian brethren, who had just arrived from Germany. With one of them, Peter Bohler, he went to Oxford, where he endured a considerable

^p Wesley's Journals, vol. I. p. 48.

share of reproach, and conversed largely with him on the nature and effects of Christian faith. By this man, says Mr. Wesley, I was, on Sunday, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith, whereby alone we are saved. But, when Peter Bohler affirmed, that true faith was always accompanied with dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness, Mr. Wesley disputed warmly against him, being accustomed, as he says, to "explain away the Scriptures, which seemed to speak that language, and to call all those presbyterians who spoke otherwise." His brother Charles, who had been offended with him for calling himself unconverted, and for hesitating to preach till he had faith, now adopted the same views of the way of salvation, and began to enjoy the delights of assurance.

But the way in which John Wesley obtained this happiness may be learned from his own narration. "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart, through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins." Now, beginning to preach salvation by faith, instantaneous conversion, and assurance of pardon, it is not wonderful that he was forbidden to preach any more in the parish churches. He then resolved to retire for a time into Germany, to the settlements of the Moravians. After a visit to count Zinzendorf, at Marienbourn, he went to Hernhuth, where he entered largely into conversation with the leaders of the Moravian church, and returned, in September, in the year one

thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, to London. Different opinions will be formed of his expedition to the continent, which seems to have fixed the character of his creed, and the complexion of his future societies.

Immediately on his return to England, Mr. Wesley began, with great diligence, to preach the doctrine which he had learned at Hernhuth. His journals discover a surprising state of mind, which it is difficult to characterize; considerable attention to the sacred Scriptures, with an almost total abandonment to impressions of mind, which would go to make the Scriptures useless; some appearance of scrupulous regard to the real sense of Scripture, while an enthusiastic interpretation is put upon passages, according as they happen first to strike the eye on opening the Bible. Great success, we are told, attended his preaching, and yet some are said to have been born again in a higher sense, and some only in a lower. But in this anomalous spirit he was called to assist Mr. Whitfield, who had begun his career of field preaching at Bristol, and was now about to return to Georgia. Mr. Wesley trod in Whitfield's irregular steps at Bristol; though he confesses, that he had been so tenacious of decency and order, that he should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if not done in a church. The multitudes which attended the preaching of Mr. Wesley were great, though not so numerous as those who had flocked to Mr. Whitfield; but the sudden impressions and loud cries of the hearers, were far greater than any thing we find recorded in the life of Whitfield. For Mr. Wesley was exactly in that state of mind which welcomes the marvellous, and which loves not only to find men instructed in the evil and *danger of sin*, and the importance of believing in

Christ for salvation, but delights to see and hear physical signs, to prove the finger of God. At a time of general impressions of religion, a little encouragement from the preacher will give a vogue to miraculous effects, which turns men from silent retirement before God, to uttering all they feel before men. Mr. Wesley having formed a place of worship, called Kingswood school, near Bristol, put it into the hands of trustees; but Mr. Whitfield, disapproving of the plan, lest the feoffees should abuse their power to the exclusion of the Gospel, went again to Bristol, and settled Mr. Wesley in full possession of the place, by which he was himself afterwards excluded. Mr. Whitfield re-visited America, and by the aid of the large contributions which he raised in England, he established the orphan hospital with favourable appearances. He preached through a great part of North America, and was received with open arms by many of the ministers, and by thousands who expressed their delight to see puritanism revived by a minister of the church of England. He found himself at home, among these descendants of the puritans, and from them acquired a larger acquaintance with the best writers in theology, which, added to their conversation, matured his gifts and graces for the ministry. But on his return to England, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-one, he says, what a trying scene appeared here! During my journey through America, I had written two well-meant, though injudicious letters against England's two great favourites, the Whole Duty of Man, and archbishop Tillotson, who, I said, knew no more of religion than Mahomet. Mr. John Wesley, had been prevailed on to preach and print in favour of perfec-

tion and universal redemption, and very strongly against election, a doctrine, which I thought, and do now believe, was taught me of God, therefore could not possibly recede from. I had written an answer, which, though revised and much approved of by some judicious divines, I think had some too strong expressions about absolute reprobation, which the apostle leaves rather to be inferred than expressed¹." The chief fault of that letter, however, was, that it was too hasty and declamatory for a doctrine which requires the most luminous display of evidence from reason and Scripture, in order to recommend it to the judgment and conscience of men, who in general fancy that their reason rejects it, because their pride abhors it.

The differences between Mr. Whitfield and Wesley were soon communicated to the hearers, and many viewed Whitfield as a fallen star, because he had declared openly for a doctrine which he firmly believed while they judged him a burning and shining light. The calvinistic brother was allowed to preach only once in the Foundery. Charles Wesley, who was more kind and generous, less positive and arminianised, than his brother, wept and prayed that the breach might be prevented; but John Wesley seems to have parted from his old companion with great coolness. Mr. Whitfield is said to have told Mr. Wesley, "you and I preach a different gospel:" thus they turned one to the right hand, and the other to left, so that, from this time, we must view the methodists as forming two distinct sects, of which the distinguishing tenets, and subsequent history will be given in the following sections.

¹ Life, p. 68.

² Wesley's Journal, vol. I. p. 77.

SECTION II.

THE ARMINIAN OR WESLEYAN METHODISTS.

THE members of this society usually call themselves *the* Methodists, to the exclusion of all others; and as Mr. John Wesley was the senior and leader of that little band at Oxford, to whom the name was originally given, his followers may be considered as the proper heirs to the honorary legacy. Yet, since Mr. Whitefield, at length, took the lead in those measures which gave a distinguishing character to the new communion, by striking out the path of field preaching, and employing lay preachers to aid the exertions of the clergy, those who adopt his creed protest against the monopoly of the name by the arminians. It is, however, useless to conflict with events which we cannot controul; and as the disciples of Mr. Wesley are usually considered the genuine methodists, it might seem unnecessary to prefix any distinguishing epithet to that name. But the word having become equivocal, by the division of the claimants into two distinct communions, that which regards itself as the parent stock may best be distinguished by the term arminian, which conveys to the public mind a knowledge of the points wherein these differ from the other methodists. To be called arminians would indeed be offensive to many, but it must be presumed, that as the Wesleyans have entitled their official periodical publication, the Arminian

Magazine, they cannot consider the epithet as dishonourable.

Both the methodist communions being originally formed by ministers of the church of England, who, though driven from her walls, professed still to remain attached to her communion, and disavowed all intention of forming a dissenting body, it may be inquired, how came they to find a place in the History of Dissenters? This question is answered by observing, that seldom have the original founders of any religious community anticipated all the consequences of their conduct, or been aware to what their societies might grow. The two thousand ministers, who were ejected from the establishment by the act of uniformity, had little more thought or intention of forming such a body as the present dissenters, than Wesley or Whitefield had of producing the modern methodists. It is more than probable, however, that both these distinguished men, before they died, saw more clearly than they publicly avowed, that their societies would form a permanent dissent, of which the separation from the national church would, in course of time, be much wider, and more strongly marked.

Mr. Wesley, indeed, maintained with greater jealousy his high church professions, and kept at a more suspicious distance from dissenters than Mr. Whitefield; but if, in this respect, he attempted to retard, in others, he much accelerated the progress of dissent among the methodists. His arminian creed separated Mr. Wesley at once from the great body of the clergy who profess a religious adherence to the doctrines contained in the formularies and articles of the establishment. An ingenious man may put an arminian sense upon the seventeenth article of the

church of England, as a barrister will give to an act of parliament the meaning which will promote his client's interest ; but to us, who have never sworn to her orthodoxy, and who are not implicated in the praise or blame of what she believes, all attempts to interpret the thirty-nine articles in any other than a calvinistic sense, prove nothing but the futility of established creeds, which are sure at length to fall into contemptuous desuetude, or to be interpreted, in defiance of all conscience and honesty, in that way which happens to please the prevailing party in the establishment.

The great doctrine of pelagianism, which the church of England condemns in her articles, that the death of Christ was intended alike for all, and that all men have a certain light, or grace, or influence, which they may by their own powers and inclinations improve, and that this individual human improvement makes the difference between one man and another, the saved and the damned, is the distinguishing creed of the arminian methodists. They, of course, deny that the conversion of men to the faith of the Gospel is in consequence of the divine election, or free favour, or peculiar influence, distinguishing them from those who perish in their sins ; but maintain that it is the result of a superior improvement of that general mercy and universal light, which would equally have saved others had they been equally diligent to improve it. To this same influence of the human will they attribute the continuance of religion, and the final salvation of the regenerate ; for while they speak strongly of the absolute necessity of being born again, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, they suppose that many who have been born again,

pardoned, justified, and sanctified in a high degree, are now in hell. Rejecting what is called the perseverance of the saints, or the doctrine which maintains that God has promised to ensure the perpetuity of religion, wherever it really exists, by a constant influence preserving the principles of holiness from extinction; they maintain that God has left the salvation of believers, as uncertain and indeterminate as it was before their conversion, so that it entirely depends upon themselves, whether they will ever be the better for their present religion or not. This is called the doctrine of falling from grace.

The methodists, of both communions, maintain the doctrine of original sin, and the universal total depravity of human nature, in consequence of the fall of our first parent Adam. But the followers of Mr. Wesley seem to give away the point again, by their notion of universal light, or grace, afforded to all, as a fruit of the death of Christ, so that some latent spark is now left, which may, by the improvement of the human will, be blown up into a flame. This is supposed to be done in regeneration, or the new birth, which the arminian methodists by no means deny or neglect. They not only maintain that it is an instantaneous work, which calvinists, of course, believe, as they consider it the production of a new principle in the soul, without any human concurrence; but the Wesleyans in general love to behold the instantaneous appearances of the change, in sudden outcries, agitations of the body, or falling down as dead.

Justification by faith alone, without any human works, and the immediate forgiveness of all sin, is maintained with earnest zeal by this community. It was the grand sentiment which Mr. Wesley learned

from the Moravians, and which he made the distinguished theme of his preaching. But neither their faith, nor its use in justification, accords with the views of calvinists. Mr. Wesley's definition of faith, as consisting in the belief of something concerning himself, "that his sins are pardoned," we have already noticed, and opposed to what appears to be the scriptural view of faith, as consisting in believing the record concerning Christ, that there is eternal life for us in him. Even his kind of faith, however, Mr. Wesley seems to have put in the place of Christ; for the minutes of conference say, "in what sense is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all men or to believers? Answer, We do not find it expressly affirmed in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any. Although we do find that faith is imputed to us for righteousness'." Thus, with an extraordinary appearance of zeal for justification by faith, and not by works, the whole doctrine is overturned, by making our faith itself, and not Christ, the object of it, the ground of our justification. The whole strain of the apostolic reasoning on this important theme shews, that if we make any thing of ours, either actions or dispositions, the foundation of our justification, we pervert the whole Gospel, from a system of grace, into a covenant of

* Wesley's Life, p. 272. It is singularly curious, that in the words which follow this unhappy statement, it is said, the text "as by one mans disobedience *all* men were made sinners, so by the obedience of one *all* were made righteous," we conceive means by the merits of Christ, all men are cleared from the guilt of Adam's actual sin." Now this text upon which such a doctrine is built, proves to be of the methodists own manufacture, for the words of the "apostle to the Romans v. 19. says only that by the obedience of one shall *many* be made righteous."

works. Another question, "Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith or by works a mere strife of words?" is answered thus: "In asserting salvation by faith we mean this, 1. that pardon, salvation begun, is received by faith producing works; 2. that holiness, salvation continued, is faith working by love; 3. that heaven, salvation finished, is the reward of this faith. If those who assert salvation by works, or by faith and works, mean the same thing (understanding by faith the revelation of Christ in us, by salvation pardon, holiness, glory), we will not strive with them at all. If they do not, this is not a strife of words; but the very vitals, the essence of Christianity, is the thing in question."

From the doctrine of justification we advance to the Wesleyan tenet of perfect sanctification. As this communion accords with the quakers in the doctrine of universal light, or grace, and in that of falling from grace, or the favour of God, so they both agree in affirming that sinless perfection is attainable in this life. One of the questions of conference asks, "what is implied in being a perfect Christian?" The answer is, "the loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul and strength. Does this imply, that all inward sin is taken away? Without doubt, or how could he be said to be saved from all his uncleanness, as Ezekiel xxxvi. 29." It is admitted, however, that the greater part of those who have died in the faith, were not thus perfectly sanctified, till just before death dismissed them from the world; nor is it denied that by the sanctified, the Scriptures rarely, if ever, mean those who are saved from all sin; that the inspired

[†] Life, p. 278.

writers almost continually speak of, or to those who are justified; and to them is applied the term sanctified; and that consequently it behoves us to speak in public, almost continually of the state of justification, but more rarely in full and explicit terms concerning those who are entirely sanctified." So that this appears a doctrine almost concealed from the uninitiated. Hence arises the difficulty of determining exactly what the present methodists mean by perfection; for they frequently express themselves so cautiously, that it should seem as if by the scriptural expression, they meant no more than the scriptural idea of a Christian, whose mind is well informed in all evangelical doctrines, whose heart is in a considerable measure conformed to the temper of Jesus Christ, so that his habitual disposition is holy and benevolent, whose conscience enjoys a peaceful sense of the divine favour, and whose life is uniformly honourable to his Christian profession. But Mr. Wesley's expressions, and frequently those of his followers, seem to teach an absolute sinless perfection; that men may live on earth in the full possession of what appears the peculiar privilege of "the spirits of just men made perfect" in heaven; with this only difference, that the perfect on earth may lose their privilege and even fall short of heaven itself, while the perfect in heaven are irrevocably fixed in their happy state. If this is not their doctrine, it seems the perfection of obscurity; and if it is, the perfection of spiritual pride.

It must, however, be observed, that as few, even of the apostles themselves, perhaps none but John, are by the methodists supposed to have obtained the blessing; so few now pretend to have scaled this

giddy height. It would, indeed, be a hazardous profession, exposing the hardy pretender to be stared at as a faultless monster, more rare than any phoenix; for, in spite of Mr. Wesley's assertion, that it is difficult to decide whether a man is perfect or not, without the miraculous discernment of spirits, most persons would think that as common sense perceives men in general to be far enough from spotless innocence, so it would require no supernatural perspicacity to discover one who was by this attainment so completely distinguished from all the rest of his species.

In point of discipline, or church government, the Wesleyan methodists are far from professing with the independents, or presbyterians, a conscientious dissent from the hierarchy of the establishment; on the contrary, they profess to admire the episcopal constitution, so that Mr. Wesley's ordination in the national church really gave him great weight among them, and was supposed to invest him with peculiar rights and authority. But it is difficult to reconcile this profession of adherence to the established ecclesiastical system, with the erection of a new one, not only perfectly insubordinate to that, but most completely unlike it in all its parts. During Mr. Wesley's life, the methodistic hierarchy was considered, by lookers on, as the popery of protestantism; for he was regarded as the universal father, who, without assuming the title, exercised the absolute powers of the head of the new church. The lay preachers whom he called forth, and sent through the kingdom, possessed no more power than he chose to afford them, as a delegated portion of his own. Of this he says, "what then is my power? It is a power of ad-

mitting into, and excluding from the societies under my care, of choosing and removing leaders and stewards, and of receiving or not receiving helpers, and appointing them when, where, and how to help me".

Since the death of their founder, the Wesleyans have become a new species of presbyterians; for the ministers exercise, what is in Scotland called the power of the keys, admitting members into their communion and to the table of the Lord, by their sole authority, and meeting in an annual general assembly, which is called the *Conference*, where the preachers receive their route for the subsequent year, and where all business which affects the whole body is finally determined. This name was given to the general assembly, because it was first convened by Mr. Wesley, in consequence of the increase of preachers and congregations, which rendered it impossible to regulate the affairs of the whole, without a personal conference with the teachers. When the patriarch was dead, it became an annual meeting for mutual conference among the preachers. The places of meeting are London, Bristol, Leeds, and Manchester. The minutes of the first conference are on record, and exhibit a minute enquiry into all the doctrine and discipline of the society.

The whole field of methodism was, after a time, divided into distinct departments, termed circuits. To each of these the conference appoints as many preachers as its extent, or number of societies may require; and at their head is placed one, who is called the assistant, because he was originally chosen to assist Mr. Wesley. The peculiar duties of the

^u Life, p. 535.

assistant are, 1. to see that the other preachers in the circuit behave well and want nothing; 2. to visit the classes quarterly, regulate the bands, and deliver tickets; 3. to take in or put out of the society or bands; 4. to keep watch-nights and love feasts; 5. to hold quarterly meetings and therein diligently to enquire, both into the temporal and spiritual state of each society; 6. to overlook the accounts of all the stewards."

Beside these assistants, there are others who are called the travelling preachers, many of whom are yet on probation for what is termed full connection. For the gradations of ecclesiastical promotion among the methodists are thus described: 1. they are received as private members of the society on trial; 2. after a quarter of a year, if they are found deserving, they are admitted as proper members; 3. when their graces or their abilities are sufficiently manifest, they are appointed leaders of classes; 4. if they then discover talents for more important services, they are employed to exhort occasionally in the smaller congregations, when the preachers cannot attend; 5. if approved in this line of duty, they are allowed to preach; 6. out of these men, who are called local preachers, are selected the itinerant preachers, who are first proposed in conference, and if they continue faithful, for four years of trial, they are received into full connection^x. Till these four years of trial are expired, they are not allowed to marry; for it seems that Mr. Wesley was not afraid of the brand of antichristianism which the apostle has fixed on forbidding to marry, provided the prohibition were only for a time.

Within each circuit there is one principal congre-

^x Wesley's Life.

gation, where the assistant may be considered as residing; but he, and all the others, continue moving round the centre, and preaching at different places in rotation. The assistant remains ordinarily two years in a circuit, but the other preachers are removable every twelvemonth. To go up to the conference, and assist in forming the decrees, which are to bind the whole ecclesiastical body, is one of the highest honours of a methodist preacher.

All those hearers of the methodists, who wish to be considered members of their society, must join a class. These are composed of such as profess to be *seeking* their salvation, so that the methodist society must not be considered as corresponding to the scriptural idea of a church, which is composed, as the commencement of all the epistles to the churches shews, not of an imaginary middle order, between believers and unbelievers, who are called "seekers," of which *tertium quid* the Scriptures know nothing, but of "all who are called to be saints," who have believed on Christ for salvation. About a dozen methodists form a class, at the head of which is the most experienced person, who is called the class-leader, whose business Mr. Wesley thus defines: "to see each person in his class once a week, at least, in order to enquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they may be willing to give to the poor; to meet the minister and the stewards of the society, to inform the minister of any that are sick, or disorderly, and will not be reprov'd, and to pay to the stewards what they have received of the several classes in the week preceding." But these classes now

meet together once a week, usually in the place of worship, when each one tells his experience, as it is called, gives a penny a week towards the funds of the society, and the leader concludes the meeting with prayer.

To separate the good grain from the refuse, they are made to pass through another sieve. The classes being composed of different ages and sexes, the members complained that they could not make known all their minds, especially concerning their easily besetting sins, and the temptations by which they were most exposed to danger: to remedy which inconvenience another subdivision was formed, under the name of the bands. "In compliance with their desire," says Mr. Wesley, "I divided them into smaller companies, putting the married, or single men, and married, or single women together. The chief rules of these bands run thus. In order to confess our faults one to another, and pray for one another, that we may be healed, we intend, 1. to meet once a week at least; 2. to come punctually at the hour appointed; 3. to begin with singing or prayer; 4. to speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed, in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting; and, 5. to desire some person, thence called a leader, to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state and temptations²."

At certain times, the Wesleyans keep what are called watch nights, which it is believed are now almost entirely confined to the last night in each year. Mr. Wesley thus relates the origin of this practice. I was

² Life, p. 237.

informed that several persons in Kingswood frequently met together at the school, and when they could spare the time, spent the greater part of the night in prayer and praise. Some advised me to put an end to this, but I believed it might be made of more general use. So I sent them word, I designed to watch with them on the Friday nearest the full moon ; that we might have light thither and back again. Abundance of people came. I began preaching between eight and nine, and we continued till a little beyond the noon of night, singing, praying, and praising God. This we have continued to do, once a month, ever since in Bristol, London, and Newcastle, as well as Kingswood^a."

Another extraordinary service among the methodists is the celebration of what are called love feasts. "In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all the mercies of the Lord, I desired," says Mr. Wesley, "that one evening in a quarter they should all come together, that we might eat bread (as the ancient Christians did) with gladness and singleness of heart. At these love feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning^b), our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the meat that perisheth, but with that which endureth to everlasting life^c."

As Mr. Wesley designed to keep his societies in some sense members of the church of England, the Lord's supper was not at first administered by those lay-preachers whom he called to his assistance ; but the methodists were taught to communicate at their

^a Wesley's Works, vol. XV. p. 207.

^b Jude 12.

^c Life, p. 238.

parish churches, except when those episcopally ordained clergymen who were in the connection, administered the sacred ordinance at the methodist chapels. But since Mr. Wesley's death, many of the methodists have become dissatisfied with receiving the Lord's-supper at the hands of clergymen whom they considered unconverted, and in communion with such persons as were frequently found at the parochial altars, so that they have petitioned the conference to grant them the indulgence of celebrating the holy feast in their own chapels. The conference has generally deemed it prudent to yield to this dissenting spirit, lest the people should determine to become dissenters altogether ; but these deviations from the original churchified methodism, have produced in many places, and especially in Bristol, much dissatisfaction and various instances of separation from the community. It is believed also, that baptism, as well as the Lord's supper, is pretty generally administered by the methodist preachers, who receive no form of ordination at all, except reception into full communion ; so that a high-church parent has begotten the most complete species of low-church which christendom has ever seen.

To the doctrine and discipline of the Wesleyan methodists, may be added a view of their characteristic features. They are distinguished by plainness of dress, especially the women, who wear a peculiar kind of bonnet, by which they might easily be mistaken for quakers, with whom, however, the methodists do not agree in the peculiar phraseology. A religious livery serves, indeed, to fix a visible barrier between this society and the rest of mankind ;

but as no peculiarity of dress is enjoined on Christians in the sacred Scriptures, except that they are exhorted not to indulge in costly finery, it appears to us, that when any sect is not contented with this general rule, but must invent a singular cut for its garments it is productive of evil rather than good consequences. It is being wise above what is written, for if the founder of Christianity had deemed it advisable for his followers to distinguish themselves from other men, by a peculiar garb, he would, doubtless, have left us directions how to make a Christian bonnet, as God gave the Jews a charge to distinguish themselves from their heathen neighbours by the blue thread in the hem of their garments. It is a voluntary humility, condemned by the New Testament as spiritual pride, which, indeed, all such distinctions tend to nourish, as well as to furnish a mask for the hypocrite and self-deceiver, who conceits that he is endued with the evidences of grace, when he has put on the garb of religion. It saves, perhaps, from the study of the fashions of the day, with all their capricious extravagances, so unbecoming the sacred gravity of a Christian; but it attracts attention to dress much more than when religious persons aim only at a general plainness of appearance.

Attention to undefined impulses of mind, to dreams, visions, and impressions of passages of Scripture on the memory, has much exposed the Wesleyan methodists to censure. The violent corporeal effects which at first attended Mr. Wesley's preaching at Bristol and Kingswood, have already been noticed; but almost ever since that period, they have at intervals been blessed, as they imagine, with such powerful impressions of religion in their meetings, as have de-

stroyed all the order and decency of divine worship, by sudden outcries of terror or joy, accompanied with violent agitations of mind and body. At these times such scenes are exhibited, as a judicious believer in divine influences would blush to see or describe. In one place of worship different services are carried on by various persons at the same time. Here is one praying over a person fallen down under supposed conviction of sin, calling upon God, with the most authoritative vociferations, to set at liberty the sinner, who is at the same time with equal importunity charged to believe. At the same moment another cries out, in a distant corner of the chapel, that brother such an one is converted and justified; for which a hymn of praise is instantly sung, without any solicitude lest it should disturb the prayers of those who are still interceding for such as have not yet received the blessing. These extraordinary seasons depend much on the preacher who may happen to be serving the chapel, for if he is injudicious, or enthusiastic enough to nourish the first symptoms, they will often spread like wild fire; but so delicate are they, that a silent frown, well applied, will suppress the rising tumult, and rescue the society from the glory or the scandal. Some of the preachers triumph in these occurrences, as grand proofs of the presence and power of God among the methodists, who at these times are supposed to gain large accessions by the numbers who are said to be convinced and converted, justified and perfected in one such night. But these pretended effusions of the Spirit are like a summer flood, loud, frothy, shallow, impetuous, destructive, and evanescent; for in a short time, Diogenes might search with his lanthorn

at noon-day to find these converts ; many of whom afterwards betray such gross ignorance of all evangelical truth, and such entire indifference to religion, that no one would ever suspect them of having pretended to be converted, justified, or sanctified. This, however, does not at all shake the confidence of a genuine methodist in the reality of this religious triumph ; for the doctrine of falling from grace is hereby confirmed ; so that instability is the genuine characteristic of a methodist society, which contains all gradations of character, from those who are on the pinnacle of perfection to such as have fallen from it into the gulph of abandoned apostacy. With pleasure we discharge the debt of justice to the body, by observing that they have among them wise and excellent ministers, who not merely deplore in secret, but openly condemn this wild enthusiastic fire, as kindled rather by the fiend of hell than brought from the sacred altar of God, and most unhappily calculated at once to expose the doctrine of divine influences to the blasphemy of the wicked, and to induce men to confound the extravagancies of the imagination with the operations of the Holy Spirit on the soul. But in spite of the efforts of wise men to counteract the evil, while Mr. Wesley's journals continue to be the classics of the methodists, the marvellous things which they contain, the dreams and impressions, the possessions of the devil, and the miracles of methodism, will always give a tone of enthusiasm to the body ; so that to restore a perfectly sound mind, it is absolutely necessary for them to place the journals of their founder in the *index expurgatorius*.

Mr. Wesley gave a vogue to simplicity among his followers. As he was himself remarkably neat in his

person, exact in his habits and manners, and simple in his style of writing and preaching, the methodist teachers have studiously imitated him, often, indeed, to a ludicrous affectation of gentle manners and soft tones, where boldness and energy would have better suited the frame of the mind, and the bulk of the body. The want of a seminary, in which the methodist preachers might receive some preparatory instruction for the ministry, easily accounts for their ignorance of theology and the original languages of the Scriptures. But they have several ministers, whose natural eloquence, and fervent zeal, charm their auditories; and while their rotatory services prevent the deficiency of the many from being perceived, there are a few who, by native genius, or superior education, have risen to eminence among the learned. Early rising, and great economy of time, which the methodists learned from Mr. Wesley, have powerfully contributed to improve the talents of his preachers.

Among the characteristic features of the Wesleyan methodists, none is more striking than their abhorrence of Calvinism. But as their preachers are uneducated men, and very indifferent divines, they content themselves with that partial contracted information on the subject which John Wesley chose to afford them in his works, or with the caricature which Fletcher's Checks present; instead of taking that enlarged survey of the subject, which is necessary to just sentiments on these profound doctrines of pure revelation. Even their ignorance, however, helps them in their warfare with the calvinists; for they frequently derive their arguments from such texts of Scripture as they would forbear to quote if they

could read the Greek Testament. But a horrible, distorted picture of calvinistic doctrine is frequently obtruded by the arminian methodist preachers as a party weapon to defend their hearers from the seductive influence of the more popular preaching of calvinist ministers. Nor is this unhallowed sword of Goliath unskilfully or unsuccessfully employed; for as arminianism is natural and congenial to the pride of the carnal mind, he will be almost certain to gain the applause of the unthinking multitude, the speculating sceptic, or the high-church pharisee, who shall brand with opprobrious epithets the calvinistic doctrine of election unto life.

The discipline of this society has been much admired, and as much censured. The classes give them an accurate knowledge of each other; and were their meetings employed in reading the Scriptures, in free conversation on them, and on other subjects connected with religion, they might be eminently conducive to the spiritual welfare of the members. But it has been observed, that meetings conducted as these are, must be, in many instances, injurious, and perhaps most injurious to those who like them most. Every week each member of the methodist society is here called upon to relate his experience, or declare the state of his soul. There are such delicate varieties in real religion as can be told to God alone; while there is such an uniformity that he who is called to report progress every week will either repeat the same dull tale again and again, or, to avoid this, and escape the suspicion of being in a stagnant state, he will give such a turn and colouring to his narrative as will make it, in the sight of God, little better than pure invention. What exceedingly aggravates the

evil is, that Mr. Wesley avowedly admitted into his class meetings those who were not Christians, and thus had no religion of which they could relate the progress; for as to their desire to flee from the wrath to come, which was to be the only qualification for admission, it could not enable them to declare the operations of religion on the heart, or to recount the intercourse of the soul with God. Such persons were, therefore, exposed to the mortification of standing like stocks, while others told their tale, or to the temptation of injuring themselves by inventing an experience, with which they might impose upon others, by throwing this counterfeit into the common stock, when it came round to their turn to contribute. Hence it is well known that, at these class meetings, the first or the forwardest person often gives a tone to the rest, and lamentations, or glad tidings, run through the whole circle, according as the momentum happens first to be given^d.

But the *bands* have encountered more severe reproach. Mr. Wesley betrays some irritation, while he attempts to repel the charge of popery which has been brought against them, by saying, "they who affirm that this is mere popery; betray the most gross and shameful ignorance. Do not they yet know that the only popish confession is the confession made by a single person to a priest? And this itself is, in no wise, condemned by our church; nay, she recommends it in some cases; whereas that *we* practice is the confession of several persons conjointly, not to a priest but to each other." How true this may be, that our church, as Mr. Wesley calls the establishment, recommends confessing sins to a priest, must

^d Walker's address to the Methodists.

be left to its friends to determine; we should not admire such confession or the church of England the more for this; but the manner in which such an acute man as Mr. Wesley repels the charge of popery most evidently betrays a bad cause. For the grand objection which judicious protestants urge against popish confession is, not that it is made to a priest, but that it is made to a creature. When, therefore, Mr. Wesley makes it a principal rule in these bands to "tell every fault which they have committed in thought, word, or deed, and every temptation which they have met;" who can wonder if impartial persons should be shocked at the idea of setting up our fellow-creatures on the throne of the heart-searching Deity, and most vehemently suspect the sincerity of those who would pretend to tell all their wrong thoughts and feelings to any mortal, much less to a company. As to the morality, not to say the spirituality, of this practice, it is liable to all the objections to popish confession, that it tends to revive ideas which should be consigned to oblivion, and not only to re-kindle the flames of lust, by exposing them to the open air, but to spread the conflagration, by imparting to others ideas of which it is their happiness to remain ignorant. So far, indeed, is the methodist confession from being less objectionable than the papistical, that if one must be adopted, we should not hesitate to prefer that which is made to a single experienced person in private, to that which is made to a whole band. As to the text of Scripture which is quoted in support of this worse than popish institution, it enjoins no more than every Christian in a humble spirit willingly practices; that when he has been overtaken in a fault, instead of obstinately denying it, and proudly

spurning the discipline which Christ has established in his church, he ingenuously confesses his fault, and is thankful to obtain the prayers of his Christian brethren, that he may be healed by pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. But to hear the confessions of the inmost soul is the incommunicable prerogative of that omniscient Spirit who, understanding the import of a sigh from the broken and contrite heart, needs no such explicit detail as would renew the pollution, and whose awful, spotless presence sanctifies the heart which is laid open to his eye.

The Wesleyan discipline furnishes an additional illustration and proof of the common observation, that the works of man rival those of God only when viewed at a distance, for a close inspection displays the immeasurable superiority of nature to art. Among the most admired systems of ecclesiastical regimen, of purely human invention, the constitution framed by Mr. Wesley has obtained the praise of discovering all the comprehension and accuracy of his superior mind. But when compared with that which Christ has left on record in his Word, as the rule of his church, its faults are detected, and its imperfection exposed. The minute regulations and restraints of its classes and bands, and quarterly inspections, resemble the anxious jealousies exercised over those states which are unhappy enough to be over-governed; while the discipline which Christ has appointed in his church displays the magnanimous policy of combining liberty with order, where the restraints of government are scarcely perceptible amidst its superior benefits. The tacit dismissal of an offending member, by refusing to renew his ticket, establishes an odious clerical despotism, which enables the minister to disfranchise the

members without even assigning a reason, but possesses none of the salutary tendencies of the reproofs or excommunication which Christ has enjoined his churches to practice on those who deviate from the path of holiness. That the sacred elevation of mind acquired by the disciples of Christ, in the choice of their church officers, and the management of their own most important concerns; should have been tamely bartered away by the methodists for the servile submission to priestly authority, which Mr. Wesley enjoined, can only be accounted for by reflecting that his disciples emerged from the establishment where the people are nothing; so that it might appear to them promotion to be made only next to nothing. The inconveniencies which they feel in being called to receive, every year or two, a minister whom they never saw or heard of before, and who was sent to them without their choice by an ecclesiastical assembly, which knew not them, their tastes, or necessities, would never be tolerated, were it not for the consoling thought that they may get rid of the unwelcome visitant in a twelvemonth. Yet even this alleviation is diminished by the reflection, that when the next comes, the more he wins their affections, by becoming intimate with their persons, and beneficial to them or their families, the severer must be the parting pangs. Knowing, as Mr. Wesley must, from his acquaintance with ecclesiastical antiquity, that authoritative councils of ministers have, in all ages, been the bane of true religion, how could his prospective care for the religious prosperity, as well as future existence of his communion, have entrusted its fates in the hands of a clerical conference, unless he had been deceived by that weakness of affection for our own children, which induces

us to believe that they will prove invulnerable to the attacks which have been fatal to others. As the corruptions of popery may be ascribed to the invasion of the priesthood on the rights of those who composed the churches; if the methodists escape the deterioration, to which every thing human tends, it must be by the progress of that which has already appeared among them, a disposition to alter, or rather to regenerate the original constitution of Mr. Wesley, by the introduction of lay authority to neutralize the spirit of ecclesiastical government.

The *esprit de corps* which, in a milder or more absolute way, reigns in most religious communions, sways the Wesleyan methodists with outrageous tyranny. It is cherished by the spirit of their discipline, but it is regarded as essential to their existence by the consciousness of the danger to which they are exposed, of sinking into distinct churches of arminian dissenters on the one hand, or, on the other, of being again absorbed in the establishment to which they profess to adhere. Their idolatrous attachment to the writings of Wesley and Fletcher awfully feeds the sectarian spirit, by rendering them obsequious to the dictates of these two partizans, instead of yielding to the catholic sway of the Bible, in which all Christians cordially agree. The littlenesses of this bigotry excite a smile when we forget the greatness of the evil. The accounts which are published every year of the increase of the society, the jealousy with which they fly off from all contact with other Christians, even when catholic union most prevails; the care which is taken to circulate the Methodist or Arminian Magazine among the members; the policy which has provided them with a press for the publication of arminian

works ; the tone of their hymns, which were chiefly written by Mr. Charles Wesley, all proclaim aloud that, next to the quakers, the Wesleyan methodists are most completely a sect.

They have, however, their excellencies. They deserve the high praise of diligent indefatigable itinerants. They have, by long and wearisome journeys, often performed on foot, penetrated into villages and remote corners where scarcely any semblance of religion was seen before ; and they have sent missionaries among the negroes, whom English rapacity had torn from their African homes, and English barbarity had treated like beasts devoid of immortal souls. The simplicity of manners, and of language, which has been preserved by this society, has rendered them peculiarly suited to the poor, who are, in their turn, made subservient to the interests of the body, by being called upon to give their penny a week, by which means mighty resources are derived from a quarter whence other societies expect nothing. While they have been mindful of the neglected, they have been instrumental to the reformation of the most abandoned ; and when their fidelity in testifying against every vice, and their zeal for the purest morals, have drawn upon them the fury of the wicked, they have endured persecution with meekness and patience beyond all praise. The equalising spirit which prevails among the methodist ministers prevents any one from growing rich by the ministry, and produces a circulation of talent and life, by sending all the preachers out in rotation. The faults which we have seen it our duty to expose, we hope they will, in time, be induced to correct : the epithet arminian, at which they already begin to blush, may, in future, be an unmerited stigma ; *the vitality which stimulates them to most laudable*

exertions will certainly enlarge and invigorate their body, and may, probably, expand and educate the mind with which it is inspired; so that, at length, the Christian church may behold, in this communion, the complete triumph of its distinguished excellencies over its serious errors and defects.

The history of the arminian branch of the methodists, as a distinct communion, commences in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty one, when Mr. Wesley differed from his former coadjutor, Mr. Whitefield, on the subject of universal redemption and Christian perfection. The controversy, to which this disagreement gave rise, will be reviewed in another part of our work; though we may here observe, that it powerfully affected the history of this society, rousing them to more zealous exertions, by the jealousy which the spirit of party generates, and inducing a more decidedly arminian taste, which was by no means to the advantage of real religion. Mr. Wesley, being now left sole patriarch of one large body, gave full scope to his talent and taste for government, and began to reduce them to the order which we have just reviewed. He had erected a chapel in Moorfields, London, on a spot where cannon had been formerly cast, which gave to his new place of worship the name of the Foundry. This was now the head-quarters of arminian methodism, for Mr. Wesley himself had a house adjoining to the chapel, and preached most constantly there, while in London. But as he was frequently called away to propagate his principles in other parts of the kingdom, and visit the societies which he had already established, he left Thomas Maxfield, who had been one of the fruits of his labours at Bristol, to watch over the society at *the Foundry*, and to pray with them. This young

man, endued with great natural abilities, and furnished with considerable knowledge of the Scriptures, which were his sole study, felt himself disposed to step beyond the line of praying and private exhortation which Mr. Wesley had prescribed to him, and to encroach upon the province of his superior. His first attempts at preaching were received in that flattering manner which naturally encouraged him to go forward ; but when Mr. Wesley received from some, who were not so well pleased with him, complaints of this irregularity, he hastened to London to suppress the rising evil. On his arrival, however, his mother, who then resided at his house near the chapel, and for whom he entertained a sacred deference, cautioned him against opposing what she called the work of God, saying to him, " Thomas Maxfield is as surely called of God to preach as you are." Mr. Wesley then consented to hear him preach, examined into the good effects, which were said to have attended his public labours, and from that time, this high churchman became a convert to lay preaching. In this career, indeed, Mr. Wesley, though last, soon became first ; for the arminian methodists have carried lay preaching beyond all former precedent.

In a similar, unexpected manner, another co-adjutor was raised up in Yorkshire. John Nelson, a mason of Birstal, in that county, having heard the methodists in London, was so deeply imbued with their principles and spirit, that, resigning the superior advantages which he then enjoyed in trade, he hastened back to his native place, to impart the joyful discovery. His relations and acquaintance immediately questioned him concerning this new faith, which was risen up in London, and asked him whether he

thought it possible for a man to know, as that people said, that his sins were pardoned ; to which he replied, that this new faith was as old as the Bible, and that he himself knew that his sins were pardoned. This being published abroad, many came to his house to enquire further into the strange report, which induced him not merely to hold long conversations with numbers on the subject of religion, but also to take the Bible, in order to point out to them those texts which he deemed irrefragable proofs of his new doctrine. Thus he began preaching, without, perhaps, either knowing or intending it ; for after having held these discourses with his neighbours, while he was sitting in his room, he found the company increase to such a degree, that he was obliged to go and stand in the door way, that those who could not enter, might hear ; till, at length, he was found in this pulpit every evening after he came home from his work. Such were the effects of his preaching, that a large congregation was soon formed of persons who had imbibed all the principles of the methodists. At the request of Nelson, Mr. Wesley visited them, took them under his patronage, and at length saw his societies planted all over the extensive plains of Yorkshire.

About the same time, the founder of methodism visited Newcastle upon Tyne, of which he says, “ I was surprised ; so much drunkenness, cursing and swearing (even from the mouths of little children), do I never remember to have seen and heard before in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for him who ‘ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ At seven, I walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town, and standing at the end of the street with

John Taylor, began to sing the hundredth Psalm. Threë or four people came to hear, who soon increased to four or five hundred. I suppose there might be twelve or fifteen hundred before I had done preaching, to whom I applied those solemn words, 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.' Observing the people, when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me with the most profound astonishment, I told them, if you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again. At five the hill on which I designed to preach was covered from the top to the bottom. I knew it was not possible for the one half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear, and I stood so as to have them all in view. After preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me under foot, out of pure love and kindness. It was some time before I could possibly get out of the press. I then went back another way than I came, but several were got to our inn before me, by whom I was vehemently importuned to stay with them, at least a few days. But I could not consent^f." This will afford our readers a specimen of the manner in which the methodists were introduced into the principal places in the kingdom; for here their society became at length very large, so that they erected afterwards, in Newcastle, a spacious chapel.

Mr. Wesley now visited Epworth, where he was born, but was refused permission to preach to his father's old parishioners. He therefore chose a singu-

^f Journals, vol. II. page 45.

larly solemn pulpit, his father's tomb, on which he stood up in the church-yard, and preached to the wondering multitude, on the words of the apostle, "the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Let the preacher himself describe the effects².

About the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-three, the rapid diffusion of methodistic principles, by the increase of labourers, and the large accessions to the societies, by the success of their preaching, led Mr. Wesley to employ his acute powers in

² "On Friday I preached again on Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones: and great indeed was the shaking among them; lamentation and great mourning were heard. God bowing their hearts, so that, on every side, as with one accord, they lifted up their voices and wept aloud. Surely he who sent his Spirit to breathe upon them will hear their cry and help them. Saturday I preached on the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of faith. While I was speaking several dropped down as dead; and among the rest such a cry was heard, of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith, as almost drowned my voice. But many of these soon lifted up their heads with joy, and broke out into thanksgiving, being assured that they now had the desire of their souls—the forgiveness of their sins. I observed a gentleman there who was remarkable for not pretending to be of any religion at all. I was informed he had not been at public worship of any kind for upwards of thirty years. Seeing him stand as motionless as a statue, I asked him abruptly, sir, are you a sinner? he replied, with a deep and broken voice, "sinner enough," and continued staring upwards till his wife, and a servant or two, who were all in tears, put him into a chaise, and carried him home. Near forty years did my father labour here, but he saw little fruit of all his labour. I took some pains among this people too, and my strength also seemed spent in vain. But now the fruit appeared. There were scarce any in the town on whom either my father or I had taken pains formerly, but the seed sown so long since now sprung up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins." Wesley's Life, page 225—7.

the formation of that system of discipline which has already been presented to view. But, like most other ecclesiastical constitutions, it grew with circumstances, and was perfected by degrees. "It was not long, says Mr. Wesley, before an objection was made to this, which had not once entered into my thoughts. Is this not making a schism? Is not the joining these people together gathering churches out of churches? It was answered, if you mean only gathering people out of buildings, called churches, it is. But if you mean dividing Christians from Christians, and so destroying Christian fellowship, it is not. For these were not Christians before they were thus joined: most of them were bare-faced heathens. The fellowship you speak of never existed; therefore it cannot be destroyed. Look east or west, north or south, name what parish you please—Is this Christian fellowship there? Rather are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connexion is there between them?"

But now the rude, brutal kind of persecution for religion which, to the infamy of our countrymen, and of Charles the second, has been peculiar to Englishmen ever since the restoration, began to try the methodists, and to prove whether they possessed the spirit of martyrdom, as well as of propagation, to suffer with patience as they had laboured with diligence. That species of opposition which the nonconformists endured from the iron sceptre of an intolerant government the methodists never experienced; for when the mob assembled round the new places of worship at Bristol, the liberal and dignified conduct of the magistrates of that city soon dispersed them, and ever after ensured to the new sect the quiet enjoyment of

its principles and worship. In London and its vicinity, indeed, the populace raged more violently, following Mr. Wesley and his disciples with showers of stones, and, at one time, almost unroofing the chapel at the Foundry. But sir John Ganson, the chairman of the Middlesex justices, called on Mr. Wesley to assure him that he need not submit to endure these insults, for that the magistrates had particular directions from the government to do them justice whenever they should apply for protection or redress.

On a tour to Birmingham, and its neighbourhood, Mr. Wesley endured still more severe trials. At Wednesbury he was hurried along by the mob from one justice of peace to another: when they all refused to interfere, though some of them seem to have stirred up the riot, he was suffered to depart, after having endured many injuries, and lost much blood by a blow which he received from one of the ruffians. Mr. Charles Wesley having been invited into Cornwall by Captain Turner, a methodist, from Bristol; a society was formed at St. Ives, which Mr. John Wesley shortly after visited. But here the rector and the curate of the parish, and the neighbouring gentry, set the mob upon them at every opportunity; so that many of the hearers were wounded, and the preaching house rased to the ground. As usual, however, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church; for the more they were persecuted, the more they grew; so that methodism here struck its roots deep, and spread its shade over all Cornwall. At the same time the persecution of the mob raged in most other parts of the kingdom, where the methodists extended their labours; but, in one instance, the rioters being a day too early for the religious, and not willing to

remain unemployed, turned their arms against those who had assembled at a neighbouring fair, but these not feeling the passive forbearance of methodists turned again, and drove the valiant conquerors of the unresisting before them, with some loss of blood and honour; so that when the methodists appeared, the next day, they found the disheartened foe had no courage to commence the threatened attack. Although the men who attempt to propagate religion by the sword may expect to feel the truth of Christ's reproof and warning to Peter, "that all they who take the sword shall perish by the sword;" yet when the love of freedom animates men to defend their civil rights, in which their religious liberties are included, they will generally prove that the ferocious persecutor who can defend his religion with no argument but blows may be easily beaten with his own weapons.

But as the methodists felt that they had the government on their side, they wisely appealed to the magistrates, rather than to their own strength or courage for protection. When they applied in vain to the country justices for redress, they moved their cause into the court of King's Bench, where the judges invariably administered to them ample justice, in such a tone as discouraged the persecutors from continuing their outrages. John Nelson and Thomas Beard having been pressed and sent for soldiers, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of preaching what they deemed the truth; on an application to government, Nelson was released by an order from the secretary of war; but the other sunk under the sufferings which he endured, and may be regarded as the proto-martyr of the methodists.

On Friday, August the twenty-fourth, one thousand

seven hundred and forty-four, Mr. Wesley preached, for the last time, at Oxford before the University. He had addressed that learned body twice before, since he had begun to preach in the fields and highways. "I am now (says he) clear of the blood of those men. I have fully delivered my own soul. And I am well pleased that it should be the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke. Yet what a wide difference is there between their case and mine! They were turned out of house and home, and all that they had; whereas I am only hindered from preaching, without any other loss, and that in a kind of honourable manner: it being determined that when my next turn to preach came, they would pay another person to preach for me. And so they did twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my fellowship^s."

^s Life, page 258. Though it was remarked that the war against the methodists at home was carried on with much more vigour than that against our enemies abroad; yet methodists themselves were now found among those who were shedding their blood in the wars of their country. Among the English soldiers on the continent of Europe, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-five, were several who had imbibed the principles of Mr. Wesley, and who, by corresponding with him, were induced to form societies for prayer and other religious exercises in the camp. This was tolerated to such a degree that John Haine and John Evans preached in the field of Mars to their comrades in arms, from whom, to use the favourite phraseology, they raised many recruits for King Jesus. They had a society of two hundred, and frequently a thousand hearers, among whom the officers were sometimes seen. They built two small tabernacles amidst this encampment of the host in the wilderness, and held constant meetings for worship, not omitting, like vigilant centinels, to watch and pray two whole nights in a week. Thus the little spark which was kindled in the cloisters of Oxford, in a few years, spread a flame of religion to the continent of Europe.

The rebellion in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-five having called forth addresses, expressive of loyalty, from all places, and all communities in the kingdom, Mr. Wesley was induced to prepare one for the methodists, who were frequently maligned as papists under the management of a concealed jesuit. On further consideration, however, he judged it better to refrain from presenting the proposed address to the king. It was about this time that the increase of methodist preachers induced Mr. Wesley to call them together to a conference, which afterwards became an annual ecclesiastical council.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-seven, Mr. Williams, one of the methodist preachers, crossed the channel and began to preach in the metropolis of Ireland. The lower classes of the people, who were chiefly catholics, gave him some disturbance; but as he succeeded in forming a society, he sent an account of his labours to Mr. Wesley, who ever flew to a favourable scene of action, and arrived in Dublin on Sunday August the ninth, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-seven. He preached in the afternoon for the curate of St. Mary's; but after a short mission he left Ireland, with a society of two hundred and eighty members, to the care of two preachers, Mr. Williams and Mr. Treinbath. He was shortly after succeeded by his brother Charles, who preached in Dublin, Cork, Athlone, and Bandon. The magistrates at first secured to them a peaceful opportunity of preaching in the sister island, but they soon changed their system of policy, and let loose the infuriated mob, who put the faith and patience of the methodists to a severe test. Mr.

John Wesley returned again to Ireland, accompanied by two additional preachers, Mr. Meriton and Mr. Swindells. The labours of the latter were successful in a high degree by the conversion of Thomas Walsh, who was himself a host. Having been educated in the darkness of popery, he knew the horrors of that realm of night, and when he became a methodist devoted himself with unquenchable ardour to the conversion of his ignorant, superstitious countrymen. Athirst for knowledge, he employed night and day in the study of the original languages of the Scriptures, and became a respectable Hebrew scholar, which gave him great weight as a preacher: but laboured with so much zeal and diligence that he died in the morning of his days, leaving behind him a character which would adorn the records of any Christian communion.

The persecution of the Irish methodists, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-nine, assumed the form of a state measure; for the grand jury at Cork made a presentment, in which they say, "we find and present Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his majesty's peace, and we pray that he may be transported. We find, and present also, Thomas Williams, Robert Swindells, with several others." Thus sanctioned, one Butler, who headed the rioters, scoured the streets day and night, proclaiming as he went, "five pounds for a swaddler's head." For Mr. Cennick, one of the first methodists, having preached in Ireland, on those words, "ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger;" the ignorant populace made no scruple of mocking at the Bible and the Saviour, the professed objects of their

reverence, by affixing the nick-name of swaddler to the Irish methodists. At the lent assizes, the preachers who were presented appeared in court, accompanied by some respectable inhabitants of Cork. The judge behaved like one who was worthy to fill the seat of justice. After having been shewn the persons presented, he called for the evidence. When Butler appeared, and in answer to the first question, said he was a ballad singer; the judge desired him to withdraw, observing, that it was a pity he had not been presented. No other witness coming forward to criminate them he turned to the preachers and said, "gentlemen, there is no evidence against you, you may retire. I am sorry that you have been treated so very improperly. I hope the police of this city will be better attended to for the time to come."

The breach between Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield, which had occasioned the formation of two separate methodist communions, was, in some measure, healed, about the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty, when both these eminent men met and interchanged kind services. Mr. Wesley says, in his journals, "on Friday, January the nineteenth, in the evening, I read prayers at the chapel in West Street, and Mr. Whitefield preached a plain, affectionate sermon. Sunday, the twenty-first: he read prayers, and I preached. Monday, I prayed in the morning at the Foundry, and Howel Harris preached, a powerful orator by nature and grace, but he owes nothing to art or education. So by the blessing of God one more stumbling block is removed^a." But at the same time, Mr. Wesley found that the breach between him and the established church was growing wider,

^a Wesley's Life, p. 379.

for he says, "having been sent for several times, I went to see a young woman in Bedlam. But I had not talked with her long, before one gave me to know, that none of these preachers were to come there. So we are forbid to go to Newgate for fear of making them wicked, and to Bedlam for fear of driving them mad¹." To the guilty in Newgate, the Gospel might be glad tidings; for it would cure them of the depraved dispositions which brought them there; but to the lunatics in a hospital of incurables, the minister of the Gospel seems to have no mission; for the religion of Jesus renews the heart by the revelation of truth to the understanding. Yet Mr. Wesley's love of the marvellous, which made him fancy that he cast out devils, might induce him also to suppose that he could cure the raging demoniacs of Bedlam. He ought not, however, to have been surprised or hurt that people, in their sober senses, should have seen no propriety in encouraging preaching to the mad.

The increase of the methodist preachers, who were now entirely devoted to an itinerant life, having rendered it necessary to make some provision for the education of their children, Mr. Wesley was induced to form the seminary at Kingswood. His biographers give the following account of the institution. "It was intended for the children of our principal friends, that they might receive a complete education in the languages and sciences, without endangering their morals in the great schools where vice is so prevalent. In time, many of the preachers married, and had families. Their little pittance was not sufficient to enable them to support their children at school. The uninterrupted duties of the itinerant life would not *permit the father to give his son the necessary educa-*

¹ Journals, vol. III. p. 26.

tion he required; and it is well known, how impossible it is in general for a mother to instruct, or even to govern a son, after a given age, especially during the absence of the father. On these considerations, after a few years, the school was appropriated to the education of a considerable number of the preacher's sons, as well as of the children of private independent members. At present, the sons of the preachers make about three-fourths of the children. These are instructed, boarded, and cloathed, and the charity is supported by an annual collection made in all the chapels belonging to the societies in these kingdoms. The collection is now so increased, that a few sums out of it are allowed towards the education of preacher's daughters*."

The cause of arminian methodism was, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty, threatened with a severe stroke by the dangerous illness of its founder. It wore, at first, the appearance of a consumption, which was much aggravated by constant speaking, so that at length the physician forbade him

* A circumstance, concerning the erection of this edifice, deserves to be recorded. "Mr. Wesley was mentioning to a lady, with whom he was in company, in the neighbourhood of Bristol, his desire and design of erecting a Christian school, such as would not disgrace the apostolic age. The lady was so well pleased with his views, that she immediately went to her scrutoire, and brought him five hundred pounds in bank notes, desiring him to accept of them and to enter upon his plan immediately. He did so. Afterwards, being in company with the same lady, she enquired how the building went on, and whether he stood in need of further assistance. He informed her, that he had laid out all the money he had received, and that he was three hundred pounds in debt, at the same time, apologising and intreating her not to consider it as a concern of hers. But she immediately retired, and brought him the sum he wanted." Life p. 296.

to stay in London, a day longer. He then retired to Lewisham, where he says, "in the evening, not knowing how it might please God to dispose of me, I wrote, to prevent vile panegyric, the following epitaph for my tomb :—

Here lieth
The Body of John Wesley,
A Brand plucked out of the Burning,
Who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year of his age:
Not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds behind him,
Praying,
God be merciful to me an unprofitable servant."

He soon recovered, however, so far as to be able to remove to the Hot Wells, near Bristol, where he wrote his notes on the New Testament. When perfectly restored to health, he entered upon the consideration of a plan which had frequently been proposed, to unite the methodists with those clergymen who had lately been raised up in the establishment to profess similar sentiments, and display a kindred spirit with Mr. Wesley. Mr. Walker, of Truro, in Cornwall, wrote to the father of Methodism, proposing to him to give up the methodist societies to the care of those evangelical clergymen in whose parishes they were formed. They said to him, "if you love the church, why do you not give up your people to those in the church, whom you yourself believe to be real ministers of Christ." If they expected him to comply, they must have formed very erroneous views of Mr. Wesley's characteristic features, and greatly undervalued his penetration, which had not enjoyed the instruction of so many years unrestrained labour, without producing in him the spirit of a complete dissenter from the dominant hierarchy. He first objected to some things

in the evangelical clergy, and then pleaded ; that he could not in conscience leave the societies to them, till he was assured, they would have the same advantages for eternity as they now enjoyed ; that unless the methodists themselves were also assured of this, they could not in conscience give up themselves ; and that even he had no right or power to dispose of them contrary to their conscience. " But you plead," says Mr. Wesley, " that the methodists already belong to the clergy by legal establishment. If they receive the sacrament from them, thrice a year, and attend their ministrations on the Lords-day, I see no more which the law requires. But to go a little deeper into this matter of legal establishment. Do you think that the king and parliament have a right to prescribe to me what pastor I shall use ? If they prescribe one which I know God never sent, am I obliged to receive him ? If he be sent of God, can I receive him with a clear conscience, till I know he is ? And even when I do, if I believe my former pastor is more profitable to my soul, can I leave him without sin ? Or has any man living a right to require this of me ?" Who will wonder that the proposed union came to nothing, or that the Wesleyan methodists have become a dissenting body, when their founder taught them the principles and language of dissent ?

While the methodists thus carefully kept to themselves, they were not without schisms in their own body. Mr. Maxfield, who has been already mentioned as the first of the arminian lay preachers, had been ordained by the bishop of Londonderry, who received him at Mr. Wesley's recommendation, saying, " Sir, I ordain you to assist that good man, that he

may not work himself to death." But Mr. Maxfield is charged with afterwards sinking into antinomianism, which, however, is always a suspicious charge from the lips of an arminian methodist, who frequently gives that name to a calvinist. It seems, indeed, from some of Mr. Wesley's articles of accusation against Maxfield, that he had only run into an excess of methodism, and adopted those extravagancies, which are now frequently prized as the infallible criterion of a genuine Wesleyan. "Your affirming people will be justified or sanctified, just now," says Mr. Wesley, "I dislike; as also your affirming they are, when they are not; the bidding them say, I believe; the speaking, or singing, or praying of several at once; and the using improper expressions in prayer, sometimes too bold, if not irreverent." But as all Mr. Wesley's exhortations were ineffectual, Maxfield withdrew from the connection, and preached to a considerable congregation near the Foundry, drawing with him, not only many of the people, but also George Bell a very popular preacher.

SECTION III.

THE CALVINISTIC METHODISTS.

IT will be observed, that Mr. Whitefield has not affixed his name to this division of the methodists, for he may be properly said to have founded no sect. He left, indeed, a few places of worship, where his labours had collected large congregations ; yet in most instances, he was satisfied with impressing upon the multitudes who flocked to hear him, the importance of their salvation and the excellencies of the religion of Jesus, and leaving them to the constant care of those evangelical clergymen, or dissenting pastors, with whom he maintained affectionate communion. But to those distinct congregations, which he had raised, have been added, what is called lady Huptingdon's connection ; for this celebrated peeress, not only built chapels in many of the principal places of the kingdom, and powerfully assisted in the erection of others, but also founded a college for the instruction of pious young men who chose to devote themselves to the ministry in this communion. Since Mr. Whitefield's death, however, the successors at his chapels have laboured diligently to extend their pale, and have formed what is called, the union of the calvinistic methodists, which may be considered as having amalgamated the different parties into one body.

The doctrinal system held by this branch of the

methodists is sufficiently announced by the epithet *calvinistic*, which they have assumed, to distinguish themselves from the followers of Mr. Wesley. While both the grand divisions of the methodists profess to believe the articles of the church of England, they differ widely in their theological systems. The arminians, who follow Mr. Wesley, plead that the articles of the establishment *may* be interpreted according to their views, but the calvinistic methodists contend that they *must* be intended to express what is called moderate calvinism. The article, which pronounces election a very wholesome doctrine, is triumphantly adduced to prove that the followers of Mr. Whitefield, hold the genuine sentiments of their mother church, when in her original purity of faith. They also insist that, in so unequivocally condemning pelagianism and free will, the established church equally renounces all connexion with arminian methodists. This contest between the rival sects, concerning the meaning of articles which were designed to establish uniformity of opinion in matters of religion, should not surprise any one; for the same controversy reigns among the clergy within the walls of the establishment.

The calvinistic methodists, indeed, profess to derive their creed originally from the sacred Scriptures, which they think most decidedly calvinistic. Yet as there are not only divisions, but sub-divisions among calvinists; some of them softening down the opinions of Calvin, while others glory in the attempt to stand higher than their master by treading upon his shoulders; the methodists who follow this celebrated reformer, may in general be pronounced *high* calvinists. For this communion was formed by a contention

on the subject, which rendered the disputants angry with the opposite system, and induced them to think that the perfection of orthodoxy lay in being at the utmost possible distance from those whom they deemed heterodox. But as the peculiar doctrines of calvinism constitute some of the most profound and awful revelations of the divine mind to fallen man, it is of all other systems the most unfit to be studied in a passion, or maintained out of spite. Those who aspire at any thing higher than merely to be calvinists for the sake of being Christians, and humbly adoring the divine conduct which they find essential to their own salvation, ought to study those deep things of God with serious attention, and to survey, not detached parts, with a contracted mind, but the grand whole, with comprehensive view ; in order to teach these sentiments in their true spirit, and to promote the profit of their disciples by shewing that the doctrines of grace are "doctrines according to godliness."

Although Mr. Whitefield well deserves the honourable title of a judicious scriptural calvinist, impartial truth forbids us to say as much for a great proportion of his followers. Both of the methodist communions sent forth teachers exceedingly rude and uninformed ; but such men were much better fitted for arminian than calvinistic preachers. Arminianism being the common creed of the careless world, it is readily welcomed by the carnal mind, without any rigorous examination of its proofs or tendencies ; so that there is no difficulty in convincing men of what they already believe. The opposite doctrine, however, is so opposed to the pride of reasoning, and the conceit of self-importance, that it meets as many oppo-

nents as hearers, and finds it necessary to prove its divine authority against hosts of objections, which men in general are accustomed to regard as self-evident propositions. In addition to this, it must be observed, that arminian methodists, when they failed of imparting their peculiar spirit to their hearers, did but leave them where they were before ; for few will grow out of humour with their own fancied powers for having been called to make much of them ; and when, on the other hand, they were successful, they only induced men to afford more liberal incense to the idol which they before delighted to worship. But when calvinist preachers did not succeed in conveying their sentiments to men, they excited a greater enmity for what was spurned as a horrid system ; and when they only seemed to succeed, they added the rashness of a crude predestinarian to the carnality of one who still loved his own will as much as ever ; for it is only where the doctrines of grace are really believed that they cure the depravity of the human heart. The calvinistic system treating men as a race of beings who had already fallen, is viewed by them with an evil eye, put to the rack to prove whence it came, and whither it leads ; so that he who is entrusted with its embassies should be well informed of its credentials, and well skilled in unfolding its divine nature, which unhappily many of the calvinistic methodists were not. Howel Harris in Wales warmly espoused Mr. Whitefield's cause against Mr. Wesley, but his native vigour and religious zeal were not guided by enlarged knowledge and sound discretion. Others who were raised up, like him, to wage war against the world and Mr. Wesley, were uneducated men, who did not see all the bearings of their own

system ; and when lady Huntingdon professed to give an academical education to her young preachers, the demands of her societies were so numerous, and there was such a rage for much preaching, and lay preaching, that they were, in various instances, called out, after a mere apology for an education, which just served to tinge them with the confidence, without imbuing them with the spirit of science. Hence they formed a body of more injudicious calvinists than England had ever before seen ; for instead of the grave, profound, holy views of divine doctrine, springing out of an enlarged and accurate acquaintance with the Scriptures, which the first puritans displayed in their writings, this new host of calvinists affected to despise those whose works would have taught them to understand their own system. What wonder, then, if the spirit of party, which raged at this time, induced such men to fly off from arminianism without considering that there was also an opposite error, and thus made them study to say things as strong, rather than as true as possible, both concerning their own sentiments and those of Mr. Wesley ? The same eagerness of zeal, devoid of the light of knowledge, produced a fondness for crude allegorical interpretations of the sacred Scriptures, which gained them, among the raw disciples whom they called out of the world, the reputation of wonderful men, at the cheap rate of a wild imagination, and a voluble tongue. This excited disgust in the calvinistic dissenters, and laid them open to the attacks of the arminians, who did not fail to charge their supralapsarian tenets with antinomianism. The preponderance of Whitefield's sentiments and example, indeed, preserved the methodists from fall-

ing at first into that ignorant perversion of calvinism, which has since withholden many of their preachers from addressing sinners, or exhorting them, as Christ has taught his ministers, "to repent and believe the Gospel."

The discipline of the calvinistic methodists is by no means so regular and defineable as that of the Wesleyans. For while Mr. Wesley was drilling his followers into a regular system, with all the policy of the catholic fathers of Paraguay, and thus raising a well disciplined army, which moved obsequious to his commanding voice; his less politic brother neglected to provide for the perpetuity of his name and with generous indifference to self, raised only a popular standard, around which detached parties of flying troops voluntarily ranged themselves. It was therefore, not till after the death of him, who alone could animate and sway the mass, that the calvinistic methodists were reduced into any kind of order. Hence we can no more be expected to give an exact draught of this communion, than to describe the illuminated disc of the moon, or to fix the forms of the ever-varying clouds. Clergymen who still remain in the bosom of the established church, have been annual visitors to the Tabernacles of Whitefield, and the chapels of lady Huntingdon; while a large proportion of the calvinist methodists may be pronounced complete dissenters. Yet where they have entirely abandoned the established church, they sometimes imitate their former parent, sometimes her opponents; now adorned with the surplice from Rome, and now in the cloak of Geneva. Their ark, which at one place humbly dwells in a tabernacle, at another is found in a gorgeous temple, which seems

designed to vie with Solomon's in all its glory. The honours of the universities, and the sanctity of episcopal orders, are here associated with uneducated preachers and presbyterian ordinations. The liturgy of the establishment is, in some of these methodistic chapels, retained with tenacious grasp, and pronounced with a pomp little short of the cathedral chaunt; while, in others, a stranger could discover no marks of distinction from the worship of an independent church.

A great proportion of the calvinistic methodists approve the forms and hierarchy of the church of England; but as they consider the establishment only a good system of human invention, and do not imagine that any divine model is to be found in the Scriptures, they hold themselves at liberty to adopt, to imitate, or to desert the established communion, according as they find their spiritual welfare injured or advanced. With this latitudinarian opinion, they feel no obligation to follow the pattern of those dissenters, who have formed churches according to what appears to them the institution of Jesus Christ to promote the salvation of his people. But as Whitefield adopted the doctrinal principles of the old puritans, his followers more easily became dissenters than those of Mr. Wesley, who frequently communicated at the parish churches, and attended the ministrations of men whose character they disliked, and whose doctrine they rejected. The promiscuous communion which prevails in the establishment was received into the calvinistic methodist chapels, where persons who were not bound to the communion by any tie were admitted to the Lord's table without previous examination. This, however, was more early aban-

doned in those tabernacles which were established by Mr. Whitefield himself; for there the dissenting mode of admission to the Lord's table has been adopted; not, however, according to the views of the independents, who require the consent of the church to those who are admitted to their communion, but according to the sentiments of presbyterians, who commit the keys of the church to the minister's hands.

In all the older congregations which form this branch of the methodists, they had what was called *the Society*, which has been already noticed in our account of the Wesleyans, and which answers to the church among the independents, as it is composed only of such persons as profess to have been converted by divine grace to the faith of the Gospel, and have been admitted by the vote of the body. But in this it differs from a church, that reception into the society, and admission to the Lord's table, do not depend upon each other; but many who are communicants know nothing of the society. Once a week the society meets in a room adjoining the chapel, when the members relate to each other their Christian experience, and occasionally receive from the minister a select address. In some places this society is subdivided into classes, like that among Mr. Wesley's followers; but as the leading persons in the congregations, who manage their affairs, seldom belong to the societies, they are not considered as a very important part of calvinistic methodism, and are very small in number, when compared with the communicants or the hearers. The persons who regulate the temporal affairs of these congregations are called Managers, of whom there are two, at each chapel, though only one of them takes a particularly active part in the admi-

nistration. They continue for life, unless any misconduct should make their removal necessary. In the tabernacles, these managers choose and invite the ministers, who come from different parts of the kingdom to preach there for a month or six weeks at a time. But the appointment of ministers to all those chapels which were under the patronage of lady Huntingdon was held in her own hands, as long as she lived, and is now invested in a committee for the whole connexion.

The calvinistic methodists are not very numerous, for their congregations are chiefly confined to the principal towns. But their places of worship are the largest and most crowded of any in the kingdom, or, perhaps, in the world; and they are of late increasing the number of small chapels in the inferior towns and rural parts of the island. The college which the countess of Huntingdon established at Trevecca, in Wales, and which has since been removed to Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, was the only seminary for the ministry which this communion could boast, till within a few years, when another was formed at Hackney, near London, for the education of those who are not in lady Huntingdon's connexion. The calvinistic methodist preachers have, in general, adopted the bold impetuous style of address, which may be considered an imitation of Whitefield's pulpit eloquence, as Mr. Wesley's preachers have copied *his* dispassionate manner and infantile simplicity. The official publication of this communion, for some years, was the Gospel Magazine, which was the rival of the Arminian Magazine. It was, for a time, conducted by a clergyman of the establishment; and in its literary and theological character may be

regarded as an index of the mind which animated this methodistic body. It was, however, dropped, after some years, and may be said to be succeeded by the Evangelical Magazine, in which independents and baptists are united with methodists and churchmen.

This communion has no characteristic feature. Its calvinistic creed cannot distinguish it from evangelical churchmen, or dissenters; while some of its congregations seem an exact copy of the established, and others of a dissenting church. It may be asked, Why then do they divide from both the cathedral and the meeting-house if they always agree with one or the other? Is it an opinion among them that an increase of sects is a blessing to the Christian church? These are questions which it is difficult to answer; especially when we perceive not only a fondness for preserving the older congregations upon their original footing, which is natural and more excusable, but also a zeal for diffusing the anomalous undefineable distinction among Christians, by planting new congregations upon this system, and even dragging others from their own independency into the methodistic union. No class of the methodists, indeed, seems to have studied the subject of ecclesiastical regimen as a part of the Christian institutes; but they have always viewed it as a fair field for the exercise of human policy. It may, however, be seriously proposed to the consideration of both calvinistic and arminian methodists, whether the *esprit de corps* does not induce them to set up the confessedly human regulations of their societies, in opposition to that constitution which the infinite wisdom and grace of the Redeemer ordained for his church.

The history of this communion, like that of the Wesleyans, commences at the time when Mr. Whitefield openly protested against the arminianism of his former coadjutor, and withdrew to bear his testimony to the doctrines of grace. The biographers of Mr. Wesley represent the separation between the two religious champions as arising from a change in Mr. Whitefield's creed; and Mr. Wesley himself attributes the breach to the letter which his calvinistic brother published on election: but the creed of the calvinist was fixed, while he who, at last, determined for arminianism was discovering that he had no settled opinion; and the publications of Mr. Wesley on universal redemption, and sinless perfection, were the forerunners and occasions of Mr. Whitefield's letter. When Mr. Wesley was travelling to Moravia in quest of Christians, and even before that period, when he discovered that he had never been converted, Mr. Whitefield was exulting in the experience of redemption, and publishing it to others with unrivalled success. He had then studied with delight the excellent work of Matthew Henry, while the other was poring over Law or count Zinzendorff; and though the celebrated commentary of Henry was neither stretched nor distorted to accommodate a system, it is certain that this favourite of Whitefield was the work of a man whose creed was the catechism composed by the Westminster assembly of calvinistic divines. Hence Mr. Whitefield was, before his separation from the arminians, much caressed by many of the calvinistic dissenters, who perceived in his preaching the savour of their popular commentator.

It is, however, more than probable that his visit to the northern states of America, the region of puri-

tans, increased his attachment to calvinistic divines and modes of expression. The descendents of the American refugees perceived in this flaming young evangelist, together with the irresistible eloquence of Apollos, his want of a more perfect knowledge of divine truth, which induced them to recommend to him the perusal of the puritan divines. With the ingenuousness of Apollos he complied; and while he was becoming more correct and confirmed in the views which he had before adopted, Mr. Wesley's arminianism becoming also more explicit and determined, he felt himself roused to enter the lists against his former friends¹.

¹ In a private letter, which is dated from Boston, September twenty-fifth, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty, Whitefield expostulates thus with his friend:—"I think I have, for some time, known what it is to have 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' These are the liberties of the children of God: but I cannot say I am free from indwelling sin. I cannot see wherein the heterodoxy of the article of our church consists, which says, that corruption remains even in the regenerate: and if, after conversion, we can neither sin in thought, word, nor deed, I do not know why our-Lord taught us to pray, forgive us our trespasses. I am sorry, honoured sir, to hear, by many letters, that you seem to own a sinless perfection in this life attainable. I think I cannot answer your letter better than a venerable old minister did a quaker, 'Bring me a man that has really arrived to that, and I will pay his expenses let him come from where he will.' Whether or not the seventh of the Romans be applicable to a converted person (as many great and eminent saints have thought) is not at all to the purpose, for there are many other passages which shew that a sinless perfection is not attainable here below. Besides, dear sir, what a fond conceit is it to cry up perfection, and yet cry down the doctrine of final perseverance! But these and many other absurdities you fall into because you will not own election; and you will not own election because you cannot believe the doctrine of reprobation. What is there in reprobation (I can see nothing) that makes it so horrid? I see no blasphemy in

Mr. Wesley, however, had the advantage of Whitefield, in being in possession of the field of action while the difference was first agitated, which he took care to improve, so as to entrench himself deeply, not only in the power over the places of worship which they had procured in concert, but also in the popular favour, by spreading terrific reports of the horrible doctrine into which Whitefield was fallen. Thus, when the calvinist returned to England, he found himself turned out of doors into the open fields, and when he attempted to preach in Moorfields he was, at first, attended only by a handful, multitudes passing by with their fingers in their ears, lest they should hear the horrid sound reprobation, and others sending him word that his fall was as great as Peter's, and that

holding the doctrine, if rightly explained: if God might pass by all, he surely might pass by some. Judge you, if it is not a greater blasphemy to say, that Christ died for souls now in hell. Surely, dear sir, you do not believe there will be a general goal delivery of damned souls hereafter. O that you would study the covenant of grace! O that you were rightly convinced of sin! Elisha Cole, on God's sovereignty, and *Veritas Redux*, written by Dr. Edwards, are worth your reading:—but I have done. If you think so meanly of Bunyan, and other puritan writers, I do not wonder you think me wrong. I find your sermon hath had expected success: it hath set the nation a disputing. You will have enough to do to answer pamphlets: two I have seen already. O that you would be more cautious of casting lots. O that you would not be so rash and precipitate. If you go on thus, dear sir, how can I concur with you?—it is impossible. I must speak what I know. This I write out of the fulness of my heart. I feel myself an accursed sinner. I look to Christ and mourn, because I have pierced him." He then concludes with a solemn fervent prayer that God would lay proud self-confidence, and every towering imagination of the creature in the dust; that the free and sovereign grace of the incarnate God may reign unrivalled. *Gospel Magazine*, vol. V. p. 39.

some judgment would overtake him. "A like scene (says he) opened in Bristol where I was denied preaching in the house I had founded. Busy bodies on both sides blew up the coals. A breach ensued; but as both sides differed in judgment, not in affection, and aimed at the glory of our common Lord, though we hearkened too much to tale-bearers on both sides, we were kept from anathematizing each other." Mr. Cennick, with others of the first labourers in the cause of methodism, having espoused Mr. Whitefield's cause, joined with him at Bristol, and assisted him to build another place at Kingswood, near that of which Mr. Wesley kept possession; so that a congregation was established there on calvinistic principles, and is now supplied by the ministers who preach at Whitefield's tabernacle in Bristol. Here the colliers, who, before Whitefield introduced the Gospel among them, were a race of semi-barbarians, worship God with constant delight and eager attention, displaying to the conviction of an infidel the power of the Gospel on the rudest of the human race.

About this time, Mr. Whitefield was ordered to attend at the House of Commons, to give information concerning the state of the new colony of Georgia. When he waited on the speaker, he was very kindly received, and assured that there would be no persecution in George the second's reign. This, probably, animated him to adopt measures for more permanent and extensive usefulness; and as the clergy of the establishment were now more angry with him than ever, for avowing the sentiments of Calvin, he sought a substitute for the parochial pulpits from which he had been excluded. But the same cause which procured him enemies won to him

also the hearts of many zealous friends; "for the free-grace dissenters," as Dr. Gillies, the biographer of Whitefield, calls them, "stood firmly by him in this time of trial; and having procured a piece of ground in Moorfields, they erected a temporary shed to screen his hearers from bad weather." As this place was designed only to last till Mr. Whitefield returned to America, it was called a Tabernacle, in allusion to the moveable tent, constructed by divine direction, for the devotions of the Israelites while they were travelling in the wilderness. Mr. Whitefield did not like the site of his new temple, because it was near the Foundry, where Mr. Wesley was preaching alone, which gave it the appearance of one altar set up against another. "All was wonderfully over-ruled for good, and for the furtherance of the Gospel. A fresh awakening immediately began. Congregations grew exceeding large, and at the people's desire I sent (necessity reconciling me more and more to lay preaching) for Messrs. Cennick, Harris, Seagrave, Humphries, and several others to assist. Sweet was the conversation I had with several ministers of Christ. But our own clergy grew more and more shy now they knew I was a calvinist; though, no doubt, as Mr. Bedford told me, when going to the bishop of London, our articles are calvinistical." New scenes of usefulness opened upon him daily, and invitations being sent to him from places where he had never before been, he was enabled to visit them, with the advantage of leaving his lay assistants to preach to his own flocks. At a common near Braintree, in Essex, upwards of ten thousand persons pressed to listen to his message. Through

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share in his dangers, and poured out their prayers for his success^m.

" His text was, " as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His words seemed to fly like pointed arrows from the bow of steel. The gazing crowd was hushed to so emn silence, and, stung with conviction of guilt, began " to look at him, whom they had pierced, and mourn" with floods of bitter tears. " Being thus encouraged," says he, " I ventured out again at noon, when the fields were quite full; and I could scarcely help smiling to see thousands, when a merry-andrew was trumpeting to them, upon observing me mount a stand on the other side of the field, deserting him, till not so much as one was left behind, but all flocked to hear the Gospel. This, together with a complaint that they had taken near twenty or thirty pounds less that day than usual, so enraged the owners of the booths, that when I came to preach a third time, in the evening, in the midst of the sermon a merry-andrew got upon a man's shoulders, and advancing near the pulpit, attempted to slash me with a long heavy whip several times. Soon after, they got a recruiting serjeant, with his drum, to pass through the congregation. But I desired the people make way for the king's officer, which was quietly done. Finding my efforts to fail, a large body, quite on the opposite side, assembled together; and having got a great pole for their standard, advanced with sound of drum in a very threatening manner, till they were near the skirts of the congregation. Uncommon courage was given both to preachers and hearers. I prayed for support and deliverance, and I was heard. For just as they approached us with looks full of resentment, I know not by what circumstance, they quarrelled among themselves, threw down their staff, and went their way, leaving, however, many of their company behind, who, before they had done, were brought over, I trust, to join the besieged party. I then continued in praying, preaching, and singing (for the noise was too great at times to preach) above three hours. We then retired to the Tabernacle, where thousands flocked. We had terminated to pray down the booths, but, blessed be God, more substantial work was done. At a moderate computation, I received, I believe, a thousand notes from persons under conviction; and on after, upwards of three hundred were received into the society one day. Some I married who had lived together without marriage.

His next year was spent in Scotland, but the cause was so powerfully advanced in London at the same time, by means of the lay preachers, that they were obliged to enlarge the Tabernacle. They were faithful men, whose whole souls were consecrated to the cause of religion among the methodists, and though not brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, in hearing Whitefield, they sat at the feet of such a teacher as seldom failed to kindle a flame of pulpit eloquence in the breasts of all who had any kind of capacity for the work. That would be no dull planet which only reflected Whitefield's borrowed light; and it appeared to be God's design, at this time, to stain the pride of all human glory, by calling the refuse of mankind, by means of preaching in highways and hedges, and by the labours of those whom the world derided as the most despicable babblers.

In Wales, Mr. Whitefield found many associates among the ministers of the Gospel, some of whom were eminently devoted to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and surprisingly successful in their labours. Howel Harris, though a lay man, was rendered the means of converting several clergymen; and the ministry of Mr. Jones kindled a flame through both south and north Wales. Several of the Welch methodist preachers came into England to assist Mr. Whitefield and his fellow-labourers; so that the congregations were kept up by variety, increased by novelty, and powerfully affected by the Welch fire,

One man who had exchanged his wife for another, and given fourteen shillings to boot. Numbers that seemed, as it were, to have been bred up for Tyburn, were, at that time, plucked as brands out of the burning." *Life*, p. 107.

hich was displayed in the animated addresses of these Cambrian brethren.

About this time, Mr. Whitefield and the methodists were attacked by the higher ecclesiastical powers. Some anonymous papers, entitled, "Observations upon the conduct and behaviour of a certain sect, usually distinguished by the name of Methodists," had been printed and circulated among the religious societies of London and Westminster; in order to counteract what the authors termed the growing evil, both among the old societies for reformation of manners, from which the methodists emanated, and also among the new ones formed out of their own numbers. Whitefield having publicly challenged his enemies (who attributed to him unworthy motives) to bring forward their charges in such a way as would admit of a proper defence, was informed that the bishop of London was concerned in composing, or revising the printed papers. In answer to a private letter which he wrote the bishop, to know whether his lordship was the author or not, and to request a copy for his own use, the bishop sent word that "he should hear from him." Mr. Whitefield, therefore, published an Answer to the Observations, addressed to the bishop of London and the other prelates concerned with him in the publication. This answer occasioned the Rev. Mr. Hurch's Expostulatory Letter to him, to which he soon replied, with thanks to the author for prefixing his name; for Whitefield, strong in the purity of his motives and conduct, only wished to meet his opponents in a fair field with open day-light^a.

^a Life, page 136.

The calvinistic methodists now obtained a large accession to their strength, and a zealous propagator of their sentiments, from a quarter whence it was least expected, from the seat of wealth and grandeur, in the person of the countess of Huntingdon. Our readers may prefer hearing of her in the words of one who presided in her connection*.

* "The noble and elect lady Huntingdon," says Dr. Haweis, in his Church History, "had lived in the highest circle of fashion: by birth, a daughter of the house of Shirley; by marriage, united with the earl of Huntingdon, both bearing the royal arms of England, as descendants from her ancient monarchs. From her childhood she felt serious impressions by the sight of a child's corpse. Though no views of evangelical truth had opened on her mind she frequently retired for prayer; and when she grew up she continued to pray that she might marry into a serious family. None kept up more of the ancient dignity and decency than the house of Huntingdon. With the head of that family she accordingly became united. Lady Betty and lady Margaret Hastings, his lordship's sisters, were women of singular excellence. The zealous preachers, branded with the name of methodists, had awakened great attention. Lady Margaret Hastings happening to hear them, she received "the truth as it is in Jesus," from their ministry, and was, some years after, united with the excellent Mr. Ingham, one of the first labourers in this plenteous harvest. Conversing with lady Huntingdon one day on this subject, lady Huntingdon was exceedingly struck with a sentiment which she uttered; that since she had known and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation she had been as happy as an angel. To any such sensation of happiness lady Huntingdon felt she was a stranger. A dangerous illness having, soon after this, brought her to the brink of the grave, she was greatly distressed. Hereupon she meditated sending for bishop Benson of Gloucester, who had been lord Huntingdon's tutor, to consult him. Just at that time the words of lady Margaret returned strongly to her recollection, and she felt an earnest desire, renouncing every other hope, to cast herself wholly upon Christ for salvation. She instantly, from her bed, lifted up her heart to Jesus the Saviour, with this importunate prayer, and immediately all her distress and fear were removed, and she was filled with joy and

Many who entertained strong prejudices against dissenters, and the unattractive plainness of their worship, and who equally disliked Mr. Wesley's con-

peace in believing. She recovered, and devoting herself wholly to God, sent a message to the Messrs. Wesleys, who were then preaching in the neighbourhood, that she was one with them, wishing them success, and assuring them of her determination to live for him who had died for her. The change wrought on her soon became apparent, and to turn her from her methodism bishop Benson was sent for. But she pressed him so hard with articles and homilies, and so urged upon him the awful responsibility of his station, under the great Head of the church, that his temper was ruffled, and he rose up in haste, lamenting that he had ever laid his hands on George Whitefield, to whom he imputed, though without cause, the change wrought in her ladyship. 'My lord (said she) mark my words, when you come upon your dying-bed that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacence.' "

"The life of this lady was now consecrated to Christ. The poor around her were naturally the first objects of her attention. These she bountifully relieved in their necessities, visited in sickness, and led them to their knees praying with them and for them. On the death of my lord Huntingdon, she was left the entire management of her children and of their fortunes, which she improved with the greatest fidelity. Become her own mistress, she resolved to devote herself wholly to the service of Christ, and of the souls redeemed by his blood. Her zealous heart embraced cordially all whom she esteemed real Christians, whatever their denominations or opinions might be; but being herself more congenial in sentiment with Mr. Whitefield than the Wesleys she favoured those especially who were ministers of the calvinistic persuasion, according to the literal sense of the articles of the church of England. And with an intention of giving them a greater scene of usefulness, she opened her house in Park-street, supposing, as a peeress of the realm, she had an indisputable right to employ, as her family chaplains, those ministers of the church whom she patronised. On the Lord's day the great and noble were invited to spend the evening in her drawing-room, where Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Romaine, Mr. Jones, and other ministers of Christ, addressed to them faithfully 'all the words of this life,' and were heard with apparently deep attention. The illness of her younger

nection on account of their ecclesiastical tactics, classes, bands, and the government of a supreme patriarch, were charmed with the churchified appearance of lady Huntingdon's chapels, the crimson seats, the outspread eagles which formed the pulpits and reading-desks, the loud and solemn-sounding organ, the much-loved surplice, and responses in the liturgy, together, perhaps, with the hope that the odium of the cross would be lightened by the pom-

son, which proved fatal, led her to Brighton for sea-bathing. There her active spirit having produced some awakening among the people, she erected a little chapel contiguous to her house, that the Gospel might be preached to them. This was so well filled that it was a third time enlarged, and the success led to future exertions. Bath, the resort of fashion, beheld an elegant and commodious place of worship raised by the same liberal hand. Oathall, Bredby, and various other places received the Gospel by her means. At first, she confined herself to ministers of the established church, but her zeal enlarging with her success, and many through the kingdom begging her assistance, she purchased, built, or hired large chapels for divine service. As these multiplied through England, Ireland, and Wales, the ministers who had before laboured for her ladyship were unequal to the task, and some were unwilling to move in a sphere so extensive which began to be brauded as irregular, and to meet great opposition. As the work greatly enlarged beyond her power to supply the chapels with regular ministers, lady Huntingdon resolved to employ the same methods which Messrs. Whitfield and Wesleys had pursued with so much success before. She invited laymen of piety and abilities to exhort and keep up the congregations which she had established. In order to provide proper persons for the work she now retired into Wales, where she erected, at Trevecca, a college for training up young men for the ministry. As the calls were often urgent, her students were too often thrust forth into the harvest before they had made any considerable proficiency in the languages or sacred literature, in which it had been her intention they should have been instructed. Few of them knew much more than their native tongue, yet being men of strong sense, and real devotedness to God, their ministry was greatly blessed." *Haweis' Church History*, vol. III. p. 239—252.

pous sound of the right honourable lady Selina the countess dowager of Huntingdon's chapel. Hence, when Mr. Whitefield returned from America, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-eight, though he found his congregation at the Tabernacle much scattered, and himself involved in debts, on account of the orphan house in Georgia, he was cheered with the intelligence that lady Huntingdon had ordered Howel Harris to bring him to her house at Chelsea as soon as he came on shore. He went, and after he had preached twice, the countess wrote to inform him that several of the nobility desired to hear him. The earl of Chesterfield, and a whole circle of titled hearers, in a few days attended, and were not contented with hearing once, but desired that the favour might be repeated.

In the month of September he made a tour through the midland counties, and visited, at Haworth, in Yorkshire, Mr. Grimshaw, a clergyman who had the soul, if not the sphere, of a Whitefield. This good man was one of those who were raised up at this time, in considerable numbers, to pursue the same object, within the established pale, which the methodists were aiming to accomplish in the highways and hedges. They were called and considered methodists, which

"I, therefore, preached again (says he) in the evening, and went home never more surprised at any incident in my life. All behaved quite well, and were, in some degree, affected. The earl of Chesterfield thanked me, and said, sir, I will not tell you what I shall tell others, how I approve of you, or words to this purpose. At last, lord Bolingbroke came to hear, sat like an archbishop, and was pleased to say, that I had done great justice to the divine attributes in my discourse. Soon afterwards, her ladyship removed to town, where I preached generally twice a week to very brilliant auditories. Blessed be God not without effectual success on some." Life p. 174.

began now to be the nick-name for a Christian, and they, undoubtedly, were of one soul with the new communion; but as they did not step forth from the enclosure to form any permanent body, separate from the establishment, they were not such methodists as demand a section in the history of dissenters¹.

Instead of the temporary tabernacle in Moorfields he founded, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-three, a building eighty feet square, which his enlarged soul, and mighty powers of elocution, filled for some time; when he set out again, according to his own language, to range after precious souls. He came to Bristol, and on Sunday, November the twenty-fifth, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-three, he opened a new tabernacle, which he complains, though large, could not contain the people, and which, though it has been since enlarged several times, is, at the present day, too small for the multitudes who flock thither. After another voyage to America, he went to Norwich, and opened a new tabernacle there.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight, was raised up another mighty coadjutor of the methodists, who, having regularly

¹ Mr. Grimshaw may, however, be considered as an exception; for he itinerated through a great part of the surrounding country, riding an astonishing number of miles, and preaching an incredible number of sermons every week, till, by his ministry, a multitude of dissenting churches sprang up in a country where he told a friend, that, on his first arrival, looking east and west, north and south, for many miles, he believed he could not see the abode of one real Christian. In the parish church, where this venerable apostle constantly laboured, Mr. Whitefield administered the Lord's supper to upwards of a thousand communicants, and preached in the churchyard to six thousand hearers.

preached for some years in the tabernacles, demands special notice in the history of the progress of calvinistic methodism. The Rev. John Berridge, vicar of Everton, in Bedfordshire, had, like many others, been preaching for years in a serious diligent manner, seeking very sincerely to make his hearers good Christians by dint of exhortations to good works. But, as must be expected, where the preacher knows not the power of the Gospel on his own heart, he saw no fruit of his labours. Grieved and perplexed, he was led to question whether he was a Christian himself or not, which it pleased God to crown with a discovery of his fallen state as ruined in the first parent, the head and representative of our race; and thus he was brought to believe on Christ the second Adam, by whom he was rescued from the ruins of the fall. Now a grand change took place in his preaching, for he burned all his old sermons, as so many recipes for the composition of deadly poison, and began to preach salvation by faith. His parishioners, on whom his former urgent exhortations to good works produced no more effect than on the walls of the building in which they assembled, now began to move, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, awakened, astonished, alarmed, enraged, convinced, melted, renewed, pardoned, and consecrated to God. Being led by a singular necessity to deliver one extemporary sermon, he adopted the method of preaching without notes, and then began to itinerate*.

* In the autumn of the year, one thousand seven hundred and fifty eight, he was rendered the honoured instrument of the conversion of Mr. Hicks, a clergyman at Wrestlingworth, in the neighbourhood of Everton. This gentleman accompanied him in May, in the next year to Mildred, where he preached to about ten thousand

people, in a large field. Such was the blessing which accompanied the first year of his evangelical labours, that he was visited in that time by upwards of a thousand persons under serious impressions; and it is affirmed, on the best authority, that by his own and the joint ministry of Mr. Hicks, about four thousand immortal souls were awakened to a concern for their eternal salvation in little more than one year. Mr. Berridge was at first an arminian, and connected with Mr. Wesley, but during the last twenty years of his life, he preached among the calvinistic methodists. *Evangelical Magazine* for 1793, p. 17.

SECTION IV.

THE MORAVIANS, OR UNITED BRETHREN.

THE first of these names shews the communion which we now introduce to our readers to be of foreign growth, and directs us to Moravia as its original seat: the additional title of the united brethren is expressive of the internal union maintained among the very different materials of which it is composed.

“The unity of the evangelic brethren,” the general name of all the churches and missions usually called Moravians, comprises three distinct classes of members. The first consists of those who belong to what is termed the ancient church of the brethren, which conceives itself to be superior in antiquity to all other protestants. In this class also are ranged all those, who, before they joined the unity, were of a communion different from the two principal protestant churches, the Lutheran and the reformed. The second class of persons who compose the grand body of the united brethren, consists of those who were educated in the Lutheran profession. The third is formed of such as have belonged to the reformed, or calvinistic protestant communion; who, as well as the Lutherans, are allowed to retain their former connexion. Hence it is apparent, that the title of united brethren designates a body composed of various materials; not amalgamated by a sacrifice of all distinctions in order to conform to any exclusive creeds, but compacted by the adhesive influ-

ence of a certain spirit diffused through the whole mass. "Living faith, vital religion, love for the mutual communion of Christian brethren, zeal which aims by united efforts to propagate the religion of Jesus, bind together," say they, "these different classes of Christians." This communion must not, therefore, be supposed to resemble an individual, composed only of subordinate members, which have no separate existence; but should be compared to a church, formed of members who all retain their own perfect individuality, though associated by attachment to attain a common object.

The three different classes of persons who compose the unity, bear among the brethren the name of *tropes*, or *tropuses*, from a Greek word which signifies modes of discipline. They will be better known to the English reader by the term *branches* of the unity. To each of these is appointed an administrator and honorary president, who is considered as the patron to watch for the welfare of that particular division over which he presides. Count Zinzendorff, who is usually supposed to have been the patriarch of the whole unity, was administrator only of the Lutheran branch.

The ministers of the unity receive ordination of different kinds, according to the countries in which they labour. There are among them bishops who confer episcopal orders, which might satisfy Laud himself, were it not that those who receive this apostolic grace, are associated with others who are satisfied with Lutheran, or even reformed, or presbyterian ordination. They have, indeed, discovered the rare and arduous way of combining episcopacy with liberality, so that if a brother of the ancient

episcopal church should be placed in a congregation where the minister has been ordained by presbyters, he will not hesitate to receive from him the Lord's-supper, or baptism for his children. Abhorrence of controversy is characteristic of the united brethren.

They consider the rights of an episcopal church, which they enjoy as real and valuable. Yet the bishops of the unity, with the pastors and deacons who have received ordination at their hands, are subordinate to a college of elders, to whom, as to safer hands than those of the prelates, the synod commits the care of the whole unity ; so that the bishops cannot ordain without the permission of these elders.

To cement the union of the brethren they convocate, at certain periods, synods, which are composed, first, of the brethren who were entrusted, for a time, with the general direction ; secondly, of those persons who are at present employed in the public service of the community ; thirdly, of deputies sent by the different congregations. They admit, also, elder sisters to be present, but not to vote. The business of this synod is of the highest importance to the interests of the unity ; for here its religious state is examined, and the condition of each church and mission minutely inspected. As it is one of the peculiarities of this communion to recur to a religious use of the lot, to determine what is the will of God, where neither Scripture nor reason shall decide ; " the synod names and constitutes the council, called, the Direction of the Unity, which is elected by all the members, and approved of the Lord, by casting the lot." This council watches over the state of religion, the conduct, education, doctrine, preaching, printing, and appointment to charges in the church.

Another regulation distinguishes this society. The members of the church are divided, according to their sex and state of life, into different classes, called church bodies. Unmarried men, and those who are termed lads adolescent, remain in the house of the single brethren. Unmarried women, whether elder or younger, live apart in the single sisters' house. In the more numerous churches there are similar abodes for the widows and widowers. They are under the inspection of an elder of their own sex, and work for their support.

The marriage of the moravians is always under the direction of the church. If the parties have previously made no choice the elders point out whom they judge suitable: but where an attachment has been formed, it is submitted to their final decision. When unable to determine in any other way, they seek to know the divine will by casting lots, which, however, are considered as deciding only what shall *not* be done.

Since the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-one, at the commencement of each year, a collection of texts is printed for every day: to each text is added a line or two of a hymn suited to the subject. Thus, say they, all the churches are fed with the same truths on the same day: for the collection being sent through all the unity, the preachers usually make it the guide of their public ministrations.

Some of their devotional meetings are occupied with the reading of the Scriptures. From Christmas to Easter they read the life and death of Christ. At Whitsuntide they begin the acts of the apostles; afterwards they read the epistles in the order in which they were written. The Lord's day is filled up

with public services; and on Friday evening they meet and sing a hymn in celebration of the Redeemer's passion.

At the baptism of children there are three or five witnesses, frequently called godfathers and mothers, who join with the minister in laying hands on the infant and pronouncing the baptismal benediction. Something like exorcism also was formerly practised to expel the powers of darkness.

The minister officiates at the Lord's supper in a white surplice, and is assisted by the deacons in the distribution of the bread, which every communicant holds in his hand till all have received it, when the whole company kneel and eat while the minister repeats the words, "take eat, this is my body which is delivered for you." The time of celebration is every fourth week, on a Saturday evening: but if the business of life render this time inconvenient it is deferred to the following day. Before the communion, the minister exhorts to self-examination, and all the assembly, kneeling down, asks absolution.

On Easter day, at the rising of the sun, the members of the church hasten to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, at the burying-ground, which, among the moravians, is kept with religious care. The minister first repeats the words of Scripture, "the Lord is risen," when the assembly replies, "he is risen indeed." The preacher then reads aloud a confession of faith in the form of a prayer, in which he makes mention of the brethren and sisters who have slept in Christ during the preceding year. The meeting concludes with a prayer for grace to keep the survivors in eternal communion with the spirits of the just arrived at perfection.

This community adopts the practice of washing each other's feet once a year, previously to the celebration of the Lord's supper. The women wash those of their own sex in a place apart; and the men the feet of their brethren. The dying receive a benediction, and the imposition of the hands of the elders. In some of their meetings they give the kiss of peace, men to men, women to women.

It is difficult to give an opinion concerning this singular body. Those who are attached to the establishment of this country may esteem it as a sister church which has preserved the venerable marks of antiquity; while dissenters will regret to see an additional proof that the waters of the sanctuary are not to be found pure till we ascend up to their source in the first churches of Christ. Some will admire as edifying rites what others will condemn as superstitious ceremonies. The music and responses of their liturgy, with many of their ceremonial observances, would be dignified by the disciples of Laud with the title of beauties of holiness; but to a rigid dissenter they savour offensively strong of popery. The high churchman will despise the methodistic hymns as well as the compound of episcopalian and presbyterian ordination, both of which will charm the methodist. Where one denomination will see Christian simplicity allied with edifying modes of worship and fellowship, another will behold childishness engrafted on superstition.

That the moravian brethren have been cruelly ~~separated~~ is well known. The charge of immorality which has been brought against them has dishonoured none but their accusers. The reader will remember that their superior sanctity and devotion first con-

vinced the mortified Wesley that he was not a Christian. As the same keen-sighted observer crossed land and sea to visit their abode at Hernhutt, and see where the Christians lived, the purity of their morals is placed beyond a doubt by the testimony of such a witness¹.

How much is it then to be regretted that the judicious, temperate, candid, and benevolent Jortin should speak of count Zinzendorff as "one of the vilest of men, the infamous head of the modern moravians'." They have employed, indeed, a phraseology which, to those who require a rigid propriety in every religious expression, must appear highly exceptionable. In their hymns and ancient formularies the humanity of the Redeemer, and the sufferings which he endured for our salvation, are treated in a way of

¹ It may, however, afford satisfaction to hear the additional evidence of one who says, "I feel myself bound, from near forty years acquaintance with many of the brethren, to speak of those whom I have known as men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and truly devoted to the work and service of our crucified Lord. I am perfectly convinced of the unfaithful reports of a Rimius excluded from their society for immorality; as of a Warburton, a Lavington, and the translator of Mosheim, who have adopted the calumnies of so prejudiced an accuser. I am informed that the impure and malignant note against the brethren, inserted by the latter in his ecclesiastical history, he would, from a conviction of its injustice, have expunged; but the copy being shown to the author of the divine legation, the bishop engaged him to let it stand, and there it remains, a monument of the bitterness, the bigotry, and the falsehood of these accusers of the brethren. With peculiarities, perhaps some of them exceptionable, yet admitting no such impure ideas as these men have imputed to them, the more the principles of the brethren are truly known, and the more intimately their lives are scrutinised, the more will they be acknowledged among the few faithful who follow the Lamb of God." *Hawes's Church History*, vol. III. page 177.

² Vol. II. page 321.

lusive affection, offensive to a taste at all disposed to be fastidious. Yet their books produce an impression which a pious mind wishes to perpetuate.

In their plainness of dress they strongly resemble quakers or methodists. Their worship is exceedingly soothing and pleasant to the senses; for their organs, of which they are very fond, are played in a soft and solemn style, and their preachers are seldom sons of thunder. Concerning their theological system it is difficult to speak. Calvinists or arminians they must be, since there is no neutral ground on which any one can stand; but while they refer to the confession of Augsburg as their creed, they speak almost constantly of the Redeemer, and avoid the discussion of those points on which the two grand parties in theology are divided. Their habit of praying to the Son of God, rather than to the Father, seems unscriptural, and contrary to that peculiar kind of honour which the inspired writings teach us to pay to the Saviour. The office which Jesus Christ holds in the divine plan of redemption renders it proper to address the Father through the mediation of the Son, by whose merits and intercession alone he is accessible and propitious to sinners. But while the moravians have erred in their mode of honouring the Son of God, as the quakers have in their view of the Holy Spirit, and the socinians in an exclusive regard to the Father; the Scriptures ordain our baptism equally in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and teach us equally to honour each in the way in which they are revealed for our salvation.

“The crown of glory and diadem of beauty,” which

adorns the united brethren, 'is their zeal for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen. In this noble career they have outstripped almost every other communion; and though they are neither numerous, nor wealthy, nor powerful, they have accomplished what would have seemed to require the treasures of princes, or the power of sovereign states.

The history of the united brethren is a subject of controversy. Many will smile at their high claims to antiquity; but as they are known to have existed ages before they appeared in this country it may be but equitable to allow them a hearing. They ascend up to the preaching of Paul and Titus in Illyricum and Dalmatia. "From Jerusalem (says the apostle) and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Titus is departed from me into Dalmatia." When the Slavonians rent these provinces from the Greek empire, they soon adopted as their own the Christian religion which they found here. The clergy of this country made a stand in behalf of purity of worship, for they united with those of Lombardy, the native land of the Waldenses, in refusing to appear at the sixth council of Constantinople, on account of image worship which then obtained in the Greek church. In the year eight hundred and ninety Bohemia and Moravia received the Gospel from two Greek monks, who are thought to have diffused the purer principles of the Slavonians, because, when the Roman emperor Otho united Bohemia to his empire, and brought the Greek Christians under the see of Rome, they succeeded in obtaining for themselves a liturgy in their own tongue, and freedom from several popish corruptions. In the year

one thousand one hundred and seventy-six the Waldenses arrived in Bohemia, and contributed to the preservation of pure religion. After having combined purity and zeal, with concealment from the rulers of the apostate church, for more than two hundred years, they were discovered, in the year one thousand three hundred and ninety-one, by the imprudence of two of their preachers, and dispersed by the blast of persecution. Re-animated by the exhortations of one Gregory, in the fifteenth century, they attempted to combine in closer union and took the name of *fratres legis Christi*, or brethren of the law of Christ. But, perceiving that they were thought to be one of the new orders of monks, which were now springing up as mushrooms, they took only the name of *fratres*, or brethren; and when joined by others from Bohemia, they assume their present title of *unitas fratrum*, the unity of the brethren.

While they were studying truth and purity in the very bosom of ignorance, corruption, and bigotry, the persecution which they endured induced them to cast their eyes around for an asylum from the dragon's rage. Seeing no retreat within the sphere of their own knowledge, they sent four deputies to travel, and inquire "if there were any where a living church free from errors and superstition, and regulated according to Christ's laws, with which the might unite." Failing in this research, they resolve that if God should in future raise up reformers to the church, they would make a common cause with them.

When Erasmus began to attract the attention

¹ Crantz, page 38.

the Christian world, the united brethren sent their confession of faith to this distinguished scholar, who, with his characteristic indecision, professed to approve, but refused to espouse their cause.

The fame which Luther acquired as a reformer, induced the brethren to send to him John Hom and Michael Weiss. Luther, delighted to find that a people yet remained to co-operate with him, hailed them as brethren, and said, "be ye apostles of the Bohemians, and I and mine will be apostles of the Germans." When Calvin became acquainted with them, he also assured them of his fraternal affection. John Alasco is claimed by the united brethren as the first person who brought their principles and worship into England.

At Fulneck, in Moravia, the former cure of the celebrated scholar Comenius, a company of the brethren remained, among whom a considerable revival took place, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty, by means of Christian David. Availing himself of their new ardour and detachment from the world, and reflecting on the evils which they had suffered from want of toleration, he applied to Nicholas Lewis count of Zinzendorff who allowed them to settle in his estates in Upper Lusatia. A number of families were conducted thither by Christian David, who formed their new settlement, which they called Hernhutt, or the Lord's Watch.

From this period the moravians date their modern history. Count Zinzendorff, after a time, joined their communion, which, when other protestants were contenting themselves with their own privileges, em-

ployed its force for the conversion of the heathen. This introduced the society into England. Count Zinzendorff arriving in London, January the twentieth, in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven, to confer with the archbishop of Canterbury, became acquainted with general Oglethorp, and the trustees of the colony of Georgia, with whom he arranged measures for the establishment of a moravian mission on the American continent. At the return of Mr. John Wesley from Georgia, he commended the brethren as the first specimens of living Christianity which the world afforded; so that Crantz says: "the brethren were much sought for by pious persons, who took them into the church vestries where conversations were held on religious subjects."

The Moravians had, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-two, twelve hundred persons of their communion in England; but Mr. John Wesley, who had introduced them into this country, now began to dislike many of their expressions, and to meditate a separation. The causes and manner of the division are differently represented by the opposite parties. From this time, Mr. Wesley waged war with the sect which he had contributed to render indigenous to our soil; for he not only charged them with antinomianism, but with a gross imposition on the government in the account which they gave of themselves to parliament, and even with such immoralities as must render either them or their accuser highly blameable*.

When count Zinzendorff re-visited England, in the

* "As for the teachers in their church, it is my solemn belief (I speak it with grief and reluctance) that they are no better than a kind of protestant jesuits." Wesley's Journals, vol. II. page 151.

year one thousand seven hundred and forty-nine, he found the brethren bitterly maligned in the press and in conversation, in the senate as well as among the people. The petition which they presented to parliament to obtain for their more scrupulous members exemption from oaths and bearing arms was, therefore, not carried without most violent opposition. For the origin of the odium under which the brethren laboured at this time, the reader is referred to their own words⁷.

The death of count Zinzendorff in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty, was a severe loss to the brethren. They have been accused by Mr. Wesley, whom some will think the last who should fling about such accusations, of making the count an infallible head of their church. But they protest, that while they honour his memory, and value his writings, they pay him no other respect than is due

⁷ "In Wetteravia, in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-six, the evil appeared and spread of trifling, ridiculous, and censurable expressions, of a figurative kind, concerning religion, which, in some, produced licentious impudence. The beginning of it arose not from irreligious principles, nor did it end in immoral practices. The cause of it was an extravagant and fanatic joy, which gave rise to inconsiderate expressions. A joyous perfection was eagerly pursued, which, however, was not attained, since the depth, both of human depravity, and of the atonement and sanctification, through the blood of Christ, which two-fold knowledge can alone produce and preserve a true and solid peace of mind, was forgotten. It was a terrible sifting time. Count Zinzendorff himself is said to have adopted the reprehensible language of the fanatics, with a view to win them back to the soberness of truth. But the charges of immodesty brought against him are thrown back on those who wrote his extemporary sermons, and published them without his knowledge or consent. His utmost efforts could scarcely purge the society from accusations which were industriously propagated against them by some distinguished names."

to an eminent minister who powerfully contribute to promote the cause of religion in that communion in which he lived and laboured.

After the death of this distinguished nobleman, the interests of the unity were extensively promoted by the labours of other brethren, Peter Boehler is mentioned as a burning and shining light. The brethren revere also the memory of Benjamin La Trobe, who has deserved well of the church of Christ among other denominations in Britain, by translating into English Crantz's interesting account of the moravian mission to Greenland. John Caldwell laboured with success both in Scotland and Ireland. Mr. Gambold, rector of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire, resigned his living, to enjoy the happiness of living wholly with the brethren, among whom he became a bishop. In another way the church of England contributed to the credit and support of the united brethren; for Dr. Wilson, bishop of Sodor and Man, consented to accept the office of administrator of the reformed tropus, or branch of the unity, and thus held towards the calvinistic and presbyterian brethren, the same relation which count Zinzendorff sustained towards the Lutherans. The brethren, however, seem to have derived no other advantage from his catholicism than the empty honour of a name.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY UNDER THE
REIGNS OF THE TWO FIRST PRINCES OF THE
HOUSE OF HANOVER.

SECTION I.

STATE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY DURING THE REIGN OF
GEORGE THE FIRST.

THE toleration enjoyed in Britain previously to the accession of the house of Hanover, was established at a critical moment, when the agitations of the nation enabled a wise and energetic prince to act according to his own enlightened views, which were far too liberal for the great mass of the people. Religious freedom therefore, like premature fruits in an unfavourable soil and climate, held but a precarious existence, depending upon the life of him to whom we owe its introduction; so that, when he was removed, his successor had nearly succeeded in depriving our isle of this palladium. But the same kind providence which had already saved us by one foreign prince, again rescued us by another, and employed the house of Hanover to perfect what had been begun by that of Orange.

On hearing of Anne's fatal illness, the whig lords who had retired from court returned unmasked, and resumed their places at the privy council, under the profession of rallying round the constitution, and

securing the protestant succession. The tories, indeed, affected to welcome them at this crisis, and betrayed no symptoms of having ever entertained any serious design of restoring the exiled family. But before we discard the accusation as the mere calumny of party violence, let us reflect how long the tories had been in power, and ask whether they had not done all that was possible or, at least, prudent; and whether it was not natural for them, when they found their schemes blasted by the death of the queen, to assume an air of innocence and satisfaction, and thus pay their court to a prince from whose sceptre they could not escape. In this light, at least, the conduct of the defeated party seems to have been viewed by George the first, who, ascribing the quiet possession of the throne to the active zeal of the whigs, took them into his bosom, and gave them the necks of their enemies. The duke of Marlborough returned to England, and was succeeded in his exile by Bolingbrooke, who had proved that infidels can persecute as well as credulous catholics.

The language of the government now sanctioned the former suspicions of whigs and dissenters, by official declarations that the late ministry were working in the dark, to introduce a popish instead of a protestant prince, to the ruin of the civil and religious liberties of the empire. After the Stewarts had made an unsuccessful effort to regain the throne, the preamble of the land-tax bill thus addresses the king: "the most implacable of your majesty's enemies will not attribute the late unnatural rebellion to any one act done by your majesty, since your happy accession to the throne of your ancestors, but even they will allow that all the mischiefs, burthens, and calamities

which shall attend the rebellion, are in truth owing to the pernicious counsels given by some persons in the late maleadministration, when, under pretence of procuring peace abroad, the present destructive war was projected to be brought into the very bowels of our native country at home, when a popish army was to be the protector of our holy religion²." After such a declaration, it will not be deemed wonderful that the dissenters, whose fears of future evils were heightened by the sense of present sufferings, should credit the worst reports of tory machinations, and expect that, as they gained the toleration by the expulsion of the Stewarts, they should be deprived of it by their return.

Had the king, however, imitated the air of unsuspecting candour which the tories acted so well, and abstained from insulting a fallen foe, he would have more completely rivalled them in policy, and might have ruled an unanimous people. But such wise and magnanimous conduct would probably have been less propitious to religious liberty, to which the tories had proved themselves deadly enemies; for if they had been admitted to a share in the early councils of the house of Hanover, they might have impeded the national return from the retrograde course which toleration had taken in the latter years of queen Anne, and prevented the rescinding of those acts which embittered the lives of the dissenters, over whose heads the axe was suspended. To the best interests of men, therefore, it was a felicity that George the first set himself instantly and heartily to unravel the web, which his predecessor had employed her last days to weave, in order to entangle the consciences of her subjects.

² *Historic Register*, vol. I. page 200,

The king, immediately on his arrival, declared to the privy council that he was determined to adhere to the principles of toleration, and endeavour to unite all his protestant subjects, by affording them all equal protection. This confirmed the hopes which the dissenters had already entertained. Mr. Thomas Bradbury, one of their ministers, gloried in being the first man in the British empire who proclaimed king George. Mr. John Bradbury, his brother, was employed, during queen Anne's last illness, to watch the event; and when he received from the Hanover resident information of her death, which happened on a Sunday morning, he immediately went to Fetter-lane, where Thomas Bradbury was preaching, and by holding up a white handkerchief, the appointed signal, announced the joyful tidings. The preacher immediately proceeded to offer up to heaven the prayer, as sincere as it was loyal, "God save king George," and closed the service, according to the custom of those days, by giving out a part of the eighty-ninth psalm in Patrick's version, which was admirably adapted to the important occasion. The same ardent friend of civil and religious liberty, whose wit was as prompt as his courage was undaunted, going with the dissenting ministers to court, to congratulate the king on his accession, was accosted by a nobleman*, who seeing them dressed in cloaks, as the rule then was at court, asked with a sneer, "what is this, sir, a funeral?" To which he replied, "no, my lord, it is a resurrection." The quakers also shewed their attachment to the same generous cause; for George Whitehead, who presented their congratulatory address to the king, having requested to be

* This is said to have been lord Bolingbrooke.

introduced to the prince of Wales, said to him, "if the king thy father and thyself do stand for the toleration, for liberty of conscience to be kept inviolable, God will stand by you^b."

One of the first of those laws which were passed in this reign for the extension or security of religious freedom, was in behalf of the quakers. Their affirmation was already accepted in civil causes instead of an oath. But as this was conceived to be an untried and hazardous experiment in legislation, the indulgence, when granted in king William's reign, was limited to a certain term of years, that opportunity might be afforded to ascertain whether a nation could exist, where the solemn affirmation of a sober man, who shews so much conscience as to suffer for his religion, could be deemed equivalent to the oath of any lewd, drunken profligate, whose execrations and appeals to the Deity accompany every sentence he utters, whether true or false. The result of this grave, national experiment was, that the quakers having passed honourably through their course of probation, obtained, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifteen, a renewal of the indulgence, without any limitation of time; so that it became a perpetual law of the realm, that the affirmation of a quaker should be admitted in civil suits at law as equivalent to an oath, and the breach of it be subject to all the penalties of perjury. In the house of Lords an additional clause was inserted in the act, extending the indulgence to Scotland and the British colonies for five years.

It must not, however, be supposed that the nation was yet so completely recovered from the derange-

^b Gough's History of the Quakers.

ment of high church and Sacheverel, as to be perfectly sane in all its notions, and decent in all its conduct. There were multitudes who considered it hard not to be allowed to persecute by law, and therefore determined to avenge themselves and their defeated party, by setting the law at defiance, in order to enjoy the luxury of worrying dissenters^c. For who could expect such a party to die without a struggle? With the revival of the old cry, "the church is in danger," they introduced the additional remark, that if the good old church of England was to be destroyed, it mattered not whether by a Lutheran king, George, or by a catholic, James the third. But the expiring tyger was too weak to rouse the spirit of the nation by his roar. The seditious pamphlets which were industriously circulated, though not deficient in venom, wanted point to sting; for, considering the talents and learning of some of the jacobites in church and state, their productions were contemptibly feeble and spiritless^d.

^c Dennon's account of the late campaigns of the French in Egypt relates, that one of the wounded soldiers being observed in the attempt to strangle a Turk, who lay bleeding by his side, was asked by his officer how he could be so barbarous? To whom the dying soldier replied, "you talk very finely; for you are at your ease. But I, who have but a few moments to live, must have enjoyment while I can." The dying tories seemed eager thus to enjoy themselves while they could.

^d At Oxford, however, they succeeded in blowing into a flame the malice and bigotry of the populace. "On the evening of the twenty-eighth of May, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifteen, a great mob of scholars, and other inhabitants of Oxford, rose and gutted, as they called it, the presbyterian meeting-house, breaking all the windows, and carrying away the doors, benches, wainscot, and seats, with which they made a bonfire," "Having heard of their intention (says a quaker) to use our meeting-house as they had done that of the presbyterians, an

The demolition of meeting-houses, though furiously accomplished, was innocent sport, when compared with the grand measures of the party for the destruction of all liberty, civil and religious. A rebellion broke out in

advertisement thereof was drawn up, directed to the mayor and sent by a friend: the mayor was not at home, but his servant promised to deliver it to him. But we obtained no benefit by our application to the magistrate for protection. After the meeting, we returned to our quarters, and about nine in the evening, hearing a great noise of the mob at a distance, we had soon an account that they were using our meeting-house as they had done that of the presbyterians the night before. They broke in by violence, and took away all the forms and seats that were loose, and taking off the doors from their hinges they burned them in their bonfire. They broke into the dwelling-house of our ancient friend Thomas Nichol's daughter, who was a widow, making great destruction and shedding some blood. From thence they went to the baptist meeting-house, and destroyed it in the like manner. By the time all was over, it was two o'clock in the morning, and there came in to us some of the sober neighbours, who told us the mob's unreasonable reasons for their violence and outrage. They said that some of the low party being at a tavern in the town, drank healths and confusions, and talked of burning the pictures of the late queen and Sacheverel; so that, in revenge, they gutted the presbyterian meeting-house. Their pretence for using the friends in the same manner was, because we voted for the low members of the present parliament. But it seems to have been principally intended as an act of celebrating the festival of the restoration, it being the twenty-ninth of May, and also the first day of the week, their Sunday, on which day, considering the temper of the times, of which this riot is but one specimen, and the spirit of many of the public teachers, and the usual topics insisted on in their discourses on this day, it is rather more than probable that their sermons had no tendency to allay this ferment. We went the next morning to view the ruins of the meeting-house, and of our friend Nichol's dwelling, and as we were at the former, I stood upon a small eminence, and looking over the ruins, many scholars and other people being there, I said pretty loudly, so that all might hear, can these be the effects of religion and learning? Some of the scholars seemed ashamed, and said it was the mob. But a spectator replied,

the north, and was, after a time, headed by the pretender himself; but with the fatuity which seemed entailed on the counsels of the family; so that the rebels were soon crushed, and many both of the leaders and the tools of the party paid the forfeit of their lives. Among these was a clergyman, who was drawn to the place of execution in the canonical habits of the church of England, which so raised the compassion of those who had no mercy on meeting-houses, that many of them sighed, sobbed, and wept bitterly, and some, particularly of the softer sex, snatched kisses from him as he passed by. When he was removed from the sledge, on which he was conveyed to Tyburn, and put into a cart, he began to read his speech to the people, which was soon perceived to be of such an inflammatory tendency, that the sheriff forbade him to proceed*.

you yourselves were that mob, and you will be overtaken with just punishment." Gough. A kindred spirit raised similar tumults at Birmingham, Bristol, Chippenham, Reading, Norwich, and some other towns where dissenters were insulted, and their places of worship burned.

* It was the next day printed and published under the title of a "True Copy of the Paper delivered to the Sheriffs of London, by William Paul, a clergyman; who was drawn, hanged, and quartered at Tyburn, for high treason against his majesty king George, July the thirteenth, one thousand seven hundred and sixteen. After observing that he was just going to appear in an eternal world, he says, "I ask pardon of God and the king for having violated my loyalty, by taking most abominable oaths in defence of usurpation against my lawful sovereign, king James the third. You see, my countrymen, by my habit, that I die a son, though a very unworthy one, of the church of England. But I would not have you think I am a member of the schismatical church, whose bishops set themselves up in opposition to those orthodox fathers, who were unlawfully and invalidly deprived by the prince of Orange. The next thing I have to do is, to exhort you all, Christian friends, to return

As Oxford was considered the nursery of these clergymen who raised the cry of church and king (meaning by church, intolerance, and by king, the pretender), that university was strictly watched, and treated with some severity. Major-general Pepper, with a strong detachment of dragoons, took possession of the city one morning at day break, declaring that he would instantly shoot any of the students, who should appear out of the bounds of their own colleges. Two or three young scholars, having discovered, when wine had thrown them off their guard, the bent of their inclinations, by uttering good wishes for the pretender, and drinking his health, it

to your duty. Remember that king James the third is your rightful sovereign. Before the revolution, you thought your religion, liberties, and properties in danger, and I pray you to consider how you have preserved them by rebelling. Are they not ten times more precarious than ever? Is it not evident, that the revolution, instead of keeping out popery, has let in atheism? Do not heresies abound every day? And are not the teachers of false doctrines patronised by the great men in the government? This shews the kindness and affection they have for the church! And to give you another instance of their respect and reverence for it: you are now going to see a priest of the church of England murdered for doing his duty (reading prayers in the rebel army, and praying for the pretender at Preston). For it is not me they strike at so particularly, but it is through me, they would wound the priesthood, bring disgrace upon the gown, and a scandal upon my sacred function. But they would do well to remember, that he who despises Christ's priests, despises Christ, and he, who despises him, despises him that sent him. As to my body, I wish I had quarters enough to send to every parish in the kingdom, to testify that a clergyman of the church of England was martyred for being loyal to the king." About the same time, another clergyman of the church of England, Edward Bisse, was convicted at the assizes at Wells, in Somersetshire, on four several informations against him, for making his ministry the vehicle of opposition to the house of Hanover. *Historic Register*, for 1718.

was industriously reported to the government. The vice-chancellor, heads of houses, and proctors of the university, aware of the unfavourable reflections to which they were exposed, thought it necessary to publish a declaration of their abhorrence of seditious practices, and their determination to punish all offenders to the utmost rigour of their statutes. This, however, did not satisfy the ministry, who, instead of treating the lads with that magnanimous forbearance which their insignificance in numbers, talents, rank, and connection should have produced, betrayed the soreness of a feeble mind, and sent down a messenger of state to take the offenders into custody. Two of them were tried in the court of king's bench, and being found guilty, were sentenced to walk through the courts of Westminster, with a specification of their crime affixed to their foreheads, to pay a fine of five nobles each, to be imprisoned for two years, and to find security for their good behaviour, for the term of seven years after their liberation. This was too much like breaking a fly upon the wheel; but when it is said by the continuator of Rapin, that many people thought they saw the proceedings of the Star Chamber revived in the severity of this sentence, it should be remembered that the Star Chamber punished men for quietly following the dictates of their consciences in the worship of God; but this was the sentence of laws enacted for the security of the throne.

The administration, indeed, acted an impolitic part in seizing this opportunity to vent its hatred against the whole body to which the offenders belonged. Oxford, which had so often blown the trumpet of alarm, to sound the church in danger, and to

summon the hosts of bigotry to war against dissenters, now had an opportunity of tasting for themselves the bitterness of popular odium; for the cry of jacobitism was loudly raised against them, so that when the university presented to his majesty an address of congratulation on the re-establishment of peace, it was rejected with disdain, as the disgusting pretence of hypocritical disloyalty. An attempt was made to subject their statutes to the inspection of the king's council; but this, when argued in the court of king's bench, was condemned by the judges. The court, however, granted an information against Dr. Purnel, the vice-chancellor, for his behaviour in the affair of the disorderly students; which was afterwards countermanded; for, on a more cool investigation, it appeared that his conduct was unexceptionable. But, by order of parliament, the Oxford decree, which was passed in the days of the Stewarts, pronouncing the doctrine of the lawfulness of resistance to tyranny a damnable tenet, was now burnt by the hands of the common hangman.

Whatever may be said of the impolicy of provoking a nest of hornets, and of the injustice of making a whole body accountable for the faults of some of its members, it certainly is consoling to see the enemies of mens dearest liberties deprived of the power to execute the mischief which is in their hearts. If there are times when governments cannot make all their subjects easy, who would not wish that the heavy arm of power should be laid on those who hate their neighbour's welfare; so that they may be at large whose principles would admit others to share with them in all their privileges? Oxford and high church having thus rendered themselves obnoxious

to the government, were exposed to the mortification of seeing the former victims of intolerance bask in the sunshine of royal smiles.

While Oxford sunk under the weight of monkish bigotry, her sister Cambridge, which had frequently distinguished herself by the liberality which should ever accompany science and religion, proportionably rose in favour, and, taking prudent care to cultivate the good opinion of the court, received some peculiar tokens of kindness. The king purchased, at the price of six thousand pounds, the library of Dr. Moore, the lately deceased bishop of Ely, containing about thirty thousand valuable books, and presented them to the favoured university, where they now form the best part of the public library^f.

To dissenters the progress of religious liberty in another direction is more interesting. The test and occasional conformity acts, and the schism bill, which had odiously oppressed them, began now to

^f This, added to the circumstance of the troop of horse sent to Oxford, gave occasion to the pair of well-known epigrams.

The king observing, with judicious eyes,

The state of both his universities,

To one he sends a regiment: for why?

That *learned* body wanted *loyalty*.

To th' other, books he gave, as well discerning,

How much that *loyal* body wanted *learning*.

Which was answered by the following:

The king to Oxford sent his troops of horse,

For tories own no *argument* but *force*;

With equal care, to Cambridge, books he sent,

For whigs allow no *force*, but *argument*.

The former of these jeux d'esprit has been attributed both to Dr. Trapp and Mr. Wharton, and the latter epigram, which compelled even Dr. Johnson to praise a Cambridge man, is ascribed to sir William Browne, the physician.

attract the attention of the government. Some members of parliament having privately discoursed on the breach of court promises to the dissenters, agreed to meet in order to discuss the propriety of seeking the repeal of the intolerant laws. Their numbers increased so rapidly, that, on the twenty-sixth of March, in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventeen, upwards of two hundred members of the House of Commons assembled at a tavern, to consult whether a bill should be brought into parliament to repeal the act against occasional conformity. Lord Molesworth, Mr. Jessop, and sir Richard Steele, addressed the company, to prove the justice and propriety of relieving the dissenters of those odious disabilities which had been imposed on them in the last reign, on account of their zeal for the protestant succession. They urged the expediency of putting these hearty friends of the king into a capacity to serve him and their country in every way, and said that they had reason to believe such a bill would be very acceptable to his majesty. The majority of the assembly were of this opinion, but Mr. Tufnel, who had consulted a person high in office, and found that the court was apprehensive such a bill would meet with serious opposition in the house of peers, advised the assembly to defer the measure rather than risk a defeat. He said, "I have already so often declared against the occasional act, that I hope nobody will suspect me of entertaining any doubt of the propriety of its repeal. For besides the reasonableness and justice of the measure, gratitude demands that we should take off a mark of infamy, which the enemies of the protestant succession have put upon the best friends of the present reigning family. But the question is,

whether we ought not to defer our application to a more favourable opportunity." Several members were of a different opinion, and Mr. Stanhope having urged the immediate introduction of the bill for the repeal of the odious act, the assembly agreed to meet again on the subject. At this subsequent meeting, where lord Molesworth was chairman, an intimation was received from one of the ministers of state, that most of the obstacles which might have prevented the passing of the bill were removed, which encouraged the assembly to proceed in preparing to introduce the business in parliament. But, while it was reported that six or seven of the bishops acknowledged the injustice done to the dissenters, and promised not to oppose the repeal, the affair was still delayed for some time^c.

In the following April, these meetings occasioned angry reflections in the House of Commons. Mr. Smith, in a speech full of reproaches on the errors of the ministry, said, "was it not an error to form parties and cabals in order to bring in a bill to repeal the act against occasional conformity?" To which Mr. Barrington Shute replied, that nothing, in his opinion, was either more just, or more reasonable, than the repeal of the act against dissenters, and he could not but wonder that a gentleman who had been turned out of his employment in the last reign, and restored since the king's coming to the crown, should account it a mistake, on the one hand, not to grant an indemnity to his majesty's declared enemies, and on the other to bring in a bill to make his majesty's undoubted friends easy. Mr. Smith defended his inconsistencies on the ground of expediency, contending

^c Continuation of Rapin, folio, p. 54.

that though he was for allowing liberty of conscience to the dissenters, and had voted against the occasional bill, yet, now it was passed into a law, it could not be repealed without disquieting the whole nation^b.

At the opening of the sessions of parliament, in November, in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventeen, the king thus pleaded the cause of his dissenting friends. "I could heartily wish that, at a time when the enemies of our religion are by all manner of artifices, endeavouring to undermine and weaken it, both at home and abroad, all those who are friends to our present happy establishment, might unanimously concur in some proper method for the greater strengthening the protestant interest, of which, as the church of England is unquestionably the main support and bulwark, so will she reap the principal benefit of every advantage accruing by the union, and mutual charity of all protestants. As none can recommend themselves more effectually to my favour than by a sincere zeal for the just rights of the crown and the liberties of the people, so I am determined to encourage all those who act agreeably to the constitution of these my kingdoms, and consequently to the principles on which my government is founded." The lords, without any debate, voted an address of thanks, which was, as usual, a perfect echo of the speech, and indicated their willingness to accomplish the object which his majesty declared, both in public and private, lay near his heart. But, when a similar address was moved in the commons, the high-church party asked, whether the church was to come over to the dissenters, or the dissenters

^b Historic Register for 1717, p. 164.

to the church, and then moved that, instead of employing the king's general expression, they should say, "to concur in the most effectual methods for strengthening the protestant interest of these kingdoms, as far as the laws now in force will permit." This was rejected, and the original address passedⁱ.

The dissenters, however, considered themselves entitled to relief, not merely from the occasional conformity and schism bills, but also from the corporation and test acts. They considered, therefore, that as the king was heartily desirous of removing the odious distinction between churchmen and dissenters in civil society, it was proper to meet and prefer their claim. The meetings which they called through the kingdom in order to take the subject into consideration, were generally of opinion, that they ought to seek the repeal of all the invidious acts, or else let all remain till a more favourable opportunity should occur. But they were informed, that the king having pressed the affair with his ministers to the utmost, was assured by lord Sunderland that "it was impracticable, and that to press the repeal of the test act, at that time, would ruin all." The king, therefore, told lord Barrington, a dissenter, that if there were any hopes of carrying the whole, he would not be against it, but if, as he was assured, there were no hopes, he believed the dissenters were too much his friends to insist upon a thing, which might be infinitely prejudicial to him, and instead of doing them any service, would only turn to their injury^k. As it appeared to be the wish of the king, that they should now obtain what relief they could, the dissenters

ⁱ Continuation of Rapin, p. 100.

^k Gough. Belsham's History of George I.

dropped all mention of the test act, receiving assurances that it should be repealed at a future time.

On the thirteenth of December, when the lords had just passed a bill for quieting and establishing corporations, by removing any disabilities which arose from not having abjured the solemn league and covenant, earl Stanhope rose and said, that in his opinion a thing of far greater importance, and well becoming the wisdom of that august assembly, remained to be done, in order to settle the minds and unite the hearts of the well affected to the present happy establishment, and that, for this purpose, he had a bill to offer to the house, entitled, "an act for strengthening the protestant interest in these kingdoms." The bill was then read, which contained a repeal of the law against occasional conformity and the growth of schism, and of some of the clauses in the corporation and test acts. When lord Stanhope moved the second reading of the bill, it occasioned a warm debate, but he endeavoured to convince the house of the equity and advantage of restoring the dissenters to their natural rights, and rescuing them from the stigmatising and oppressive laws, which had been enacted in turbulent times, and obtained by indirect methods; for no other reason but because they shewed their determined adherence to the revolution and the protestant succession. He was supported by the earls of Sunderland and Stamford, and opposed by lord Buckinghamshire and several other peers. It was alledged, in general, that if this bill passed into a law, instead of strengthening, as its preamble pretended, it would certainly weaken the church of England, by plucking off her best feathers, and investing others with those offices which she then exclusively enjoyed. The earl of Nottingham ob-

served, that the church of England was certainly the happiest church in the world, since the greatest contradictions contributed to her support; for nothing could be more contradictory than a bill to strengthen the protestant interest and the church of England, which, at the same time, repeals two acts that were made for her further security.

When the debate was resumed, on the eighteenth of December, the earl of Cholmondly said, that before they proceeded any further in an affair, wherein the church was so nearly concerned, he thought it highly proper to have the opinion of that venerable bench (pointing to the bishops). This being unanimously approved, the archbishop of Canterbury rose, and declared against the bill. He said, he had all imaginable tenderness for well-meaning dissenters, but endeavoured to prove, both that they had very little share in the merit of the revolution, and that they had abused the liberty which that event afforded them. He urged that the scandalous practice of occasional conformity was considered by the soberest part of the dissenters themselves as censurable, and that though the law to prevent the growth of schism might carry a face of severity, it was needless to make an act to repeal it, since no advantage had ever been taken of it against the dissenters. Had his grace sat under the suspended sword of Dyonisius, while feasting on the good things which the see of Canterbury affords, would he have thought it needless to remove the weapon, because it had never fallen upon him, since it had been hung up *in terrorem*?

Sir William Dawes, archbishop of York, followed on the same side; but having thrown out some reflections on Dr. Hoadly, bishop of Bangor, he was answered

by that prelate, who said that he was so far from having altered his principles, as was insinuated, that both before and after he had been promoted to his present station in the church, he had endeavoured to bring over the dissenters; though he ever was of opinion, that gentle means were the most effectual. He shewed, at large, the unreasonableness and ill policy of imposing religious tests as a qualification for civil or military employments, which abridges men of their natural rights, deprives the state of the services of many of its best subjects, and exposes the most sacred institutions and ordinances to be abused by profane and irreligious persons. He confuted the assertions that the occasional conformity and schism bills were not persecuting laws, and affirmed, "if we admit that the principle of self-defence allows us to lay restraints on others in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the heathens, and even of the popish inquisition, may be justified." "As to the power of which some clergymen seem so fond and so jealous," said he, "I own that the desire of power and riches is natural to all men, but I have learned, both from reason and the Gospel, that this desire should not be allowed to entrench upon the rights and liberties of our fellow creatures and countrymen,"

The noble sentiments of Dr. Hoadly received the sanction and support of another prelate, Dr. Kennet, bishop of Peterborough. He declared that, without reflecting on his brethren for opposing this bill, he was assured the repeal of the odious acts would, far from injuring the church, redound to her advantage and security. The evidence of history proved, that the church was most safe and flourishing, when the clergy, instead of affecting power which did not belong

to them, were tender of the rights and liberties of their fellow subjects ; but that arbitrary measures and persecutions first brought, as the experience of the last century sufficiently evinced, scandal and contempt upon the clergy, and, at last, ruin both upon church and state. " The church, said Dr. Kennet, is a term indeed, of sacred and venerable import, when properly understood ; but in the mouths of bigots, or malicious and designing men, it has often produced the most fatal effects. The cry of the church is in danger, has often made a mighty noise in the mouths of silly women and children, and been employed to carry on sinister designs. The dissenters, though the most zealous promoters of the revolution, have hitherto been no gainers by it ; for they might have enjoyed toleration under king James, if they would have complied with his measures ; while the establishment has gained all its present honours and emoluments. To exclude dissenters from serving that government of which they are the firmest supporters is, (said the bishop) the grossest political absurdity¹. Lord Landsdowne was the most violent opposer of the bill. His speech, full of stings, replete with poison, proved, that only the power, not the disposition to persecute, was extinct.

At length, it was agreed to leave out some clauses concerning the corporation and test acts, by which concession the bill passed the lords, and was sent down to the commons, where after some debate, it was carried by a majority of two hundred and twenty one against one hundred and seventy voices. It received the royal assent, February the eighteenth,

¹ Historical Register for 1719. Belsham's History of George I. p. 123.

in the year one thousand seven hundred and nineteen^m.

Another measure rendered this period highly propitious to the religious liberties of Britain. To curb the unruly spirit of the high-church party, king George imitated the prudent conduct of William the third, by selecting those clergymen who displayed the most liberal principles and conciliatory temper, and placing them in the first posts of dignity and influence in the establishment. Dr. Benjamin Hoadly had so distinguished himself in the last reign, by his rational views of ecclesiastical power, that as soon as the house of Hanover acceded to the throne, he was rewarded by the see of Bangor. He had already provoked an irritable envenomed race, by his "Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-jurors;" and now he rendered himself doubly odious to the party, by preaching before the king, at the chapel royal, a sermon which explained the true "Nature of Christ's Kingdom." That Christ's kingdom is not of this world; that its nature, sanctions, rewards, and punishments are entirely spiritual; that the ministers of the Gospel, as such, have no right to busy themselves in secular government; and that the magistrate has no real authority to punish men for matters purely of a religious nature, seem to dissenters mere truisms, so evident and so innocent, that no one can, with any face, set himself to contradict or persecute the believer in such reasonable and harmless doctrines. But, for these principles, the convocation fell upon Dr. Hoadly with more fury than could have been supposed to dwell in reverend breasts. The lower house appointed a committee of six doctors, to

^m Historical Register for 1719

draw up a representation against those doctrines, to be laid before the archbishops and bishops. When read for the approbation of the house, it was unanimously passed, accusing the bishop of asserting in the two obnoxious publications, principles, the tendency of which was, first, to subvert all government and discipline in the church of Christ, and to reduce his kingdom to a state of anarchy and confusion ; and secondly, to impugn and impeach the regal supremacy in causes ecclesiastical, and the authority of the legislature to enforce obedience in matters of religion by civil sanctions. To prove their charge against the bishop they quote such passages as the following: " Since the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself is king; and in this it is implied, that he himself is the sole lawgiver to his subjects, and the sole judge of their behaviour in the affairs of conscience and salvation ; and in this sense, therefore, his kingdom is not of this world, that he hath in these points left behind him no visible human authority, no vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his place, no interpreters, upon whom his people are absolutely to depend ; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people. All his subjects, in whatever station they may be, are equally subjects to him, and no one of them any more than another hath authority either to make new laws for Christ's subjects, or to impose a sense upon the old ones, which is the same thing, or to punish the servants of another master in matters relating purely to religion." The lower house of convocation gravely asked their lordships, the bishops, " whether the pernicious tendency, which they ascribe to the writings of Dr. Hoadly, is not proved by such language, and whether,

if his assertions be true, all acts of government in affairs of religion have not been an invasion of Christ's authority, and an usurpation upon his kingdom? And who can wonder that the clergy should be indignant at these assertions, which were nothing less than a public declaration, that the dissenters had justly claimed a liberty to form churches according to their own views of the Scriptures, and that the persecutions, with which they had been tormented by the hierarchy for this imaginary crime of schism, were the grossest violations of truth, and justice, and religion? But that such sentiments should be held by a bishop of an exclusive establishment, should be so honestly and boldly avowed, should be preached to a king, and received at court with most decided approbation, was such an illustrious triumph of Christian truth and religious freedom, as had not been seen since Dr. Owen, the favourite chaplain of the protector, addressed to the high court of parliament his Plea for Toleration.

While the convocation declared that the king ought to be angry with these sentiments, as subversive of the regal supremacy in matters ecclesiastical, his majesty was so enamoured of them, that he would not suffer the lower house to carry their accusation before the bishops, but sent a writ to the archbishop of Canterbury, commanding him to prorogue the convocation from the tenth of May to the nineteenth of November following^a. How equitable was it that those who were so deeply in love with the regal authority in the church should feel it, so far as to prevent them from worrying a bishop! From the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-five, when the

^a Historic Register for 1717.

clergy in convocation gave up to the parliament the right of taxing their order, they were seldom allowed to do much business ; but, since the persecution of Dr. Hoadly, they have been suffered only to meet and disperse as a matter of form. To this, several angry allusions were now made by the tories, both in church and state. When some objections were raised in the House of Commons to the nomination of Dr. Snape to preach before the members, because he had been one of the abettors of Sacheverell, a member exclaimed, " it was because he had been an opposer of Hoadly." " But," said he, " if the court had not interfered, the doctor would have shewn the bishop fine play ; but the king having commanded his ministers to disband the army, they have, instead of it, disbanded the convocation."

It occasioned, indeed, deep and bitter murmurings among those who longed to rule the conscience, when they found themselves stripped of this power. They complained that the convocation was become the butt of ridicule to the whole nation, as an assembly which could not safely be trusted together long enough to do any thing ; but was called to meet and disperse like a regiment of soldiers on parade. They were tortured by the mortifying reflection that the assembly of the presbyterians in Scotland, and even the quakers, and other dissenters in England, had their constant meetings for the settlement of their own discipline ; while the church of England, which moved as the moon among the smaller stars, no sooner assembled her sons, than they were dispersed again by the breath of authority. " Why is this, it is asked, but because *they* are voluntary societies, not incorporated with the state, as we are ; whereby if we have

gained some advantages, we have lost greater^o." But how few would resign the advantages of a connection with the state, in order to enjoy the "greater" privileges of voluntary societies! It is, however, not true that the established clergy are deprived of civil advantages which dissenters enjoy; for there is no law to prevent clergymen from meeting for mutual consultation. To legislate for the consciences of men with penal sanctions, which was the real object of ambition, is a power which dissenters cannot boast, and happily for Britons, the parliament has been so jealous of our rights and liberties as to take away this power from the convocation; for the senate now passes all laws relative to the church as well as to the state. This alteration has been highly advantageous to liberty of conscience, which generally felt some ill effects from an ecclesiastical court, assembled to debate upon the means of rearing the dignity of their order upon the ruins of free enquiry.

The Bangorian controversy, besides giving a death blow to the convocation, was, in other respects, favourable to the rights of conscience. Hoadly was so provokingly cool, that the enraged tories betrayed before the world their defeat, by displaying the difference of their spirit, while they started and flew off from his weapons of celestial temper like the fiend of darkness from the touch of Ithuriel's spear. The public eagerly gazed at this battle among the terrestrial gods, and did not fail to profit by the instructive spectacle; for they discovered to their consolation, that ecclesiastico political terrors, like what mariners call quaker guns in a merchant vessel, need only to be

^o Free and candid Disquisitions relative to the Church of England, p. 170.

closely viewed in order to be despised. The convocation seems to have cared but little for its credit when it hazarded an attack on such sentences, as we have quoted from Hoadly, which, like light, bring with them at once the evidence of their own worth, and of their superiority to their opposites.

The dissenters were drawn into the controversy by Dr. Snape, who, writing against the bishop, says, awake ye Calamys, ye Pierces, ye Bradburys: what, all in a profound lethargy, when your own honour, and that of Calvin is thus at stake! James Pierce, of Exeter, woke at the call, and in a printed letter to Dr. Snape, entitled, "the Dissenters' Reasons for not writing in behalf of Persecution," proved that the bishop of Bangor had attacked no ecclesiastical powers which the dissenters were disposed to defend. He shewed also that, whatever veneration dissenters entertained for Calvin, as an eminent reformer, they neither bowed to him as infallible, nor approved of all his actions, but unequivocally condemned his conduct towards Servetus. In this much censured act, however, Pierce, who verged towards the opinions of Servetus rather than those of Calvin, candidly declared that the latter only acted as all other protestants, as well as papists, would have done at that time, when the doctrine of toleration was unknown to the world. With admirable coolness of temper, keenness of irony, and elegance of style, he proved that the dissenters were delighted to see the bishop of Bangor lay the axe to the root of persecution, "which," says he, "if we have not yet learned to abhor, it must be confessed that the high-church party has not yet treated us sufficiently severely." To evince that the dissenters were not practising, as Dr. Snape insinuated, a temporary

political dereliction of their principles, in order to give Hoadly an opportunity to sap the foundations of the church of England, their last address to the king was quoted, in which they said, "our principles are, as we hope, the most friendly to mankind, amounting to no more than those of a general toleration to all peaceable subjects, universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light in his will about them¹."

The parliament pursued its enlightened and liberal course, by passing another bill for the extension of religious liberty. An act of the twelfth year of the reign of queen Anne contained a clause which breathed all the unchristian bigotry of that period, by declaring that no person should be capable of being guardian for the poor in the city of Bristol, who should not have taken the sacrament according to the rites of the church of England. This clause, which excluded the dissenters of Bristol, a highly respectable and wealthy body, from all influence in managing the fund for the poor, to which they so largely contributed, was now repealed. But, deeply as the act was stained with barbarian prejudices, the bishop of Bristol was not ashamed to become its advocate, and to use all his influence both to procure a petition against the repeal, and to induce several lords to join him in his opposition. The dissenters triumphed, and left the bishop and his coadjutors to record their own disgrace in the form of a protest².

It was now once more proved, that in a depraved world, from the greatest good, serious evils may arise. Knowledge enables men to commit crimes which are

¹ Dissenters Reasons, by James Peirce. London, 1718.

² Historic Register for 1718.

impossible to the ignorant. Religious liberty was, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-one, loudly accused of generating socinianism, heresy, and blasphemy; for many fugitive pieces were published against the divine inspiration of the Scripture, and all its principal doctrines. One pamphlet, entitled, "a sober Reply to Mr. Higgs' merry Argument for the tritheistical Doctrine of the Trinity," attracted peculiar attention; because it was said to have been written by an officer of his majesty's household. Though the heretic was dismissed from his post, the mistaken friends of orthodoxy still complained that little or nothing was done to punish him. The dean of Windsor brought into the upper house, an act for the more effectual suppressing of blasphemy and profaneness. The preamble of the bill set forth, that many books had lately been published against the Christian religion, which the laws in being were not sufficient to suppress. It was, therefore, to be enacted, that any person who should deny certain doctrines as set forth in the thirty-nine articles of the church of England; and every person who should, by advised speaking, deny these points, should, over and above the penalties of the statute of William the third against blasphemy, be imprisoned for several months; unless he should renounce his error, and make profession of his faith in a certain prescribed form of words. It was further to be decreed, that if any preacher, in any separate congregation, should by writing, or advised speaking, deny any fundamental articles of the Christian religion, he should be deprived of the benefit of the toleration act. The justices of the peace were to summon any such preacher, or any person called a quaker, to appear before them, and to

subscribe the declaration of his belief contained in the act, or be denied the benefit of the toleration. When the archbishop of Canterbury moved that the bill be committed, lord Onslow declared that he was as much against blasphemy as any man ; but he would not vote for a law which enacted persecution, as this bill did, and therefore he moved that it be thrown out. The duke of Wharton rose, and said, " I am not insensible of the common talk concerning me, and therefore I am glad of this opportunity to justify myself, by declaring that I am far from being a patron of blasphemy, or an enemy to religion. I will not, however, vote for this bill, which I believe repugnant to Scripture." Then, pulling an old family bible out of his pocket, he read several passages, and as a comment upon them, moved that the bill be rejected. The earl of Peterborough declared, that though he was for a parliamentary king, he did not choose a parliamentary God or religion ; and if the house were for such an one, he would go to Rome, and endeavour to be chosen a cardinal ; for he would rather sit with the conclave than with their lordships on these terms. The bishop of Peterborough, also, declared that he would never be the executioner of such a law, which seemed to lead to the setting up of an inquisition. But the bishops of London, Winchester, and Litchfield and Coventry, with several lay lords, voted for this protestant inquisition. One of the peers said, that he believed the calamity of the South Sea project, which then blasted the credit and destroyed the peace of the country, was a judgment of God upon the blasphemy and profaneness of the nation. To which lord Onslow replied, " certainly the peer, who made that remark, must have been a great sinner ; for it is said, he has

been a great sufferer by the South Sea scheme." The bill was thrown out by a great majority.

Cordial attachment to the great doctrines which this bill was designed to guard, as well as love for truth in general, and jealousy for the rights of private judgment, should induce every one to rejoice in the failure of this mistaken project. The being of a God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, needed not this act of parliament to secure the belief of them among men. The provisions of the act were as iniquitous as the whole design was useless. To oblige men to hold certain doctrines, as they are set forth in the articles of the church of England, wherein is this less papistical and inquisitorial than to compel them to believe as the council of Trent decrees? But to condemn to imprisonment for asserting our sentiments in common conversation; to summon preachers to give an account of their theology to a country justice, who has perhaps no more learning than is contained in the word *mittimus*, and no more religion than is included in all he recollects of his prayer-book; to oblige millions of men to subscribe to the words which a few scores of politicians have dictated on the most abstruse questions in divinity, was a compound of folly and iniquity which no ingenuity can brand with a name sufficiently opprobrious.

But the liberality of the government, not of the times, was further displayed in an extension of the indulgence granted to the quakers. One of the friends had written a letter to the king, and a petition was presented to the legislature, to alter the form of their affirmation; because some of their members thought the words, "in the presence of Almighty God,"

equivalent to an oath. Thomas Story, being introduced to the secretary of state, said, that the favour which the government intended to the quakers, in perpetuating the affirmation act, as it then stood, was rendered nugatory to many of their friends, who could not avail themselves of it; because they thought the words of the act contrary to the law of Christ concerning an oath. He then produced the form, and afterwards read that to which the yearly meeting had agreed. The earl of Sunderland said to him, "you might have had the latter as soon as the former."

The king and the ministry being satisfied, a bill was brought into the House of Commons to grant relief to the quakers, by altering their affirmation into the following words, "I solemnly, sincerely, and truly affirm and declare." Though it had passed without difficulty till it came to the House of Lords, it there encountered violent opposition. Atterbury said, "I do not know why such indulgence should be given to a people who are hardly Christians." To which a northern peer replied, "I wonder that the reverend prelate should doubt whether the quakers are Christians or not, since they are so, at least, by act of parliament; being included in the toleration act, under the general name of protestant dissenters." At this the bishop took fire, thinking it a sneer at the church of England, which was created by act of parliament. But when the lords were going into a committee on the bill, they were unexpectedly presented by the archbishop of York with a petition from some who called themselves "the clergy in and about London." It stated that the bill might much affect the property of the subject, and the legal maintenance of the clergy by tythes; "because the people called quakers, pre-

tend to deny the payment of tythes upon conscience; and therefore may be under a strong inducement to ease their consciences in one way, by violating them in another." The reverend petitioners tell the legislature that government cannot be administered without oaths. But, say they, that which chiefly moves your petitioners to apply to your lordships is, their serious concern lest the minds of good men should be grieved and wounded, and the enemies of Christianity triumph, when they shall see such condescension made by a Christian legislature, to a set of men who renounce the divine institutions of Christ, particularly that by which the faithful are initiated into his religion, and denominated Christians, and who cannot, on this account, be deemed worthy of that sacred name. They also express their Christian solicitude, lest multitudes should turn quakers, in order to screen themselves from oaths. Did these clergymen expect the peers to believe, that they, who showed so much selfishness in preferring the security of their tythes to the peace of the quakers' consciences, and so much malevolence in branding the quakers for heathens, were, in reality so full of benevolence, as to be chiefly moved with a fear lest the minds of good men should be grieved with concessions to tender consciences? The two archbishops and several bishops warmly supported the petition, but other prelates opposed it, and it was at last rejected as a libel.

One of the quakers, in an interview with the duke of Somerset, told him that he heard the two universities intended to imitate the London clergy in petitioning against the bill. The duke replied, "perhaps Oxford may attempt it; being influenced

^r Gough.

by the archbishop of York, and the bishops of Rochester and Chester; but if they should, they are obnoxious. As to Cambridge, they have done nothing. A set of fellows, calling themselves the clergy in and about London, have sent in a petition, in which they pretend to blame both houses of parliament for encouraging a sect which they rank with Jews, Turks, and infidels; as if we were to be imposed upon by them, and knew not what to do without their directions. Besides, we do not know who they are; for out of five hundred of the London clergy, we find only forty-one names, and these very obscure." It was to the honour of the London clergy that so few of them chose to affix their names to such a wretched deed.

When the bill was in the committee, the archbishop of Canterbury moved that the quakers' affirmation might not be admitted in courts of judicature, but only among themselves; which was no more than they could have done for themselves, without applying to the legislature. The archbishop of York proposed that their affirmation should not be admitted in any suit for tythes, the very cause in which they most needed legislative relief. But the archbishops were both outvoted.

Among the events favourable to religious liberty, may be mentioned the fall of bishop Atterbury, the great Goliath of priestly domination and intolerance. Lord Carteret, informed the House of Peers, on the seventeenth of October, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-two, that his majesty had committed Dr. Atterbury, bishop of Rochester, to the tower, for having entered into a dangerous conspiracy against his person and government, and

desired the consent of the house to the detention of him, and of two lay peers prisoners, which was immediately granted. A bill was brought in to inflict on the bishop certain pains and penalties, which the mover prefaced by applying to him the prediction concerning Judas, "let his days be few, and his bishopric let another take." Against the bill, he pleaded before the Lords with much strength of mind and eloquent persuasion, but in vain: for he was condemned to exile, and died at Paris in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-two. The evidence, on which he was hurled from his proud height, stripped of all his honours, and sent to bear the accumulated ills of comparative poverty, painful disease, and extreme old age in a foreign land, was extremely slight. But our sympathy for the sufferings of the old man is diminished by the consideration that he was an unrelenting foe to those rights, which of all others ought to be dearest to accountable immortal creatures. The fall of their patriarch was a mortifying stroke to the whole host of advocates for dominion over conscience, while it proportionably inspirited the friends of free enquiry and unlimited toleration, who now rallied round the throne of George and enjoyed his warmest patronage. The king made a tour through the western parts of the kingdom, and was every where received with the liveliest satisfaction. The dissenters who were, of course, eager to testify their joy at the triumph of the house of Hanover over their old enemies and persecutors, in the address, which their ministers presented to the king, forcibly expressed such sensations as their known principles must produce. "It is no small satisfaction to us (say they), that we are engaged with a people

so well disposed to loyalty and fidelity to your majesty as the body of protestant dissenters, of whom we can with safety declare, that, in all parts of the kingdom, they adhere most inviolably to your majesty as their only rightful and lawful sovereign, and are very sensible of the many blessings of your auspicious reign." His majesty received their address very kindly, and said to them, " your steady and constant adherence and affection to my person and government give you a most just title to my protection, on which you may always depend."

Shortly after, the king set off for Hanover, and was arrested on the road by the hand of death, June the twenty-second, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign. His political conduct belongs not to the ecclesiastical historian ; it is for us to record only the influence of his reign upon religion.

Like William the third, the first George was vehemently suspected of heresy and infidelity* ; because, in his tolerant court, there were those who avowed their scepticism, without imitating Bolingbroke, the

* To expose the moral character of George the first, *Mist's Journal*, a tory newspaper, of which complaint was made in the House of Commons, contains the following reflections on the twenty-ninth of May. " Austin's wish was to have seen Christ in the flesh, Paul in the pulpit, and Rome in its glory. Next to these, I could have wished to have seen the restoration. Then we were ruled by gentlemen, now we are governed by whores. Against this, and some other papers of a similar spirit, was balanced the *Independent Whig*, a periodical publication, which, to the elegance and hilarity of the *Spectator*, added a keenness of satire and an ardour for liberty, which must have been perfectly intolerable to the satellites of tyrants, and the abettors of priestcraft. " *The Craftsman*, after the manner of *Daniel Burgess*," by this writer, was enough to sting them to madness.

infidel minister of Anne, by combining it in monstrous alliance with intolerance. Next to the hero of our glorious revolution, the lovers of liberty, the patrons of the rights of conscience, will ever cherish the memory of him who founded the regal dynasty of the house of Brunswick. But dissenters must, with peculiar delight, tell their children how he came to snatch their dearest liberties from threatened destruction ; with what dignified firmness he covered their churches with the broad shield of justice ; how many of their present privileges were restored to them by his administration ; and how much more he intended which the ignorance and intolerance of the times forbade him to accomplish ; while they will ever close the grateful detail with the observation, such was the father of the family which now inherits the British throne.

SECTION II.

THE STATE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY DURING THE
REIGN OF GEORGE THE SECOND.

GEORGE the second ascended the throne under the happiest auspices. In the prime of life, already the popular favourite, married to a princess of superior accomplishments, he was also skilled in the art of government, having been accustomed, during his father's absence from the kingdom, to the weight of the British sceptre, which he well knew how to wield. The whigs hailed him as a parliamentary king, the heir of the protestant succession; while the tories, who had hated his father as an usurper of the throne of the Stewarts, were disposed to drop their enmity to the son, who, unstained with the guilt of the usurpation, quietly succeeded to the regal patrimony. The names of Hanoverians and Jacobites, which had divided the subjects of the first George, were exchanged, during the reign of his successor, into those of the court and country party. By the banishment of Atterbury, and the death of many of the most bigotted nonjurors, the clergy were left under the influence of the low churchmen, whom the preceding reign had exalted to the first posts in the establishment. The dissenters congratulated themselves on the quiet accession of a prince who owed his throne to those principles of which they were the avowed patrons. Rendered more liberal themselves by the ease and security which they enjoyed, they

beheld with pleasure the growing liberality of many of the established clergy, with whom they maintained not merely a literary correspondence but also an affectionate Christian intercourse.

After decent expressions of sorrow for the loss of his father, the king, in his first speech to the council, declared his attachment to his subjects' rights and liberties, both civil and religious, and his determination to maintain them inviolate. To the parliament he observed, that the kingdom was happy within its own bosom, and venerated by all the nations of Europe. "At home (said he) I find among my subjects such mutual charity and forbearance diffused through the kingdom, that the national church repines not at the indulgence given to scrupulous consciences, and those who receive the benefits of the toleration envy not the established church the rights and privileges which they by law enjoy. From these happy causes have flowed that general tranquillity, that rise of public credit, and that increase of trade and commerce, which have greatly improved our wealth and power, and given us that respect and influence abroad which have so much advanced the glory and happiness of the nation." Having taken the oath which the constitution requires, to support the church of Scotland, the king assured his northern subjects, by his commissioner, that he was determined to support the presbyterian church in all its rights and privileges.

In the church of England, some symptoms of the resurrection of high church claims now appeared. The convocation of the clergy seemed disposed to seize the opportunity, which a new reign might afford, to obtain a deliverance from the constrained inaction, and disgraceful inanity, to which they

were grieved to find themselves reduced. The clergy of the province of Canterbury being prorogued to the twentieth of March, were again, on that day, further prorogued to the tenth of April; but before this was signified to the lower house, a member addressed the prolocutor in a remarkable speech, which was published in the journals of the times. The speaker observes, that as his majesty has answered the late address of both houses with an assurance that he will be ready on his part towards a vigorous execution of the law against profaneness, blasphemy, and immorality, it will, doubtless, be more effectually accomplished if the church representative, that is to say, the convocation, point out to him what persons or things are most likely to promote or impede his royal and pious design. After admitting that it is his majesty's undoubted prerogative to call the convocation, and to dictate the subjects of discussion, he says, "it cannot be deemed unseasonable for any dutiful son or servant, both of the church and state, than to loosen his tongue-strings, when the several parts and offices of our holy religion are exposed to mockery, and the doctrines and mysteries of religion are furiously attacked by men of profligate principles." He then modestly proposes that the deists and socinians should be "struck dumb by an awful censure from the convocation."

The king, however, well understanding the import of this harangue, did not choose to be told by the convocation "what persons and things" he should smite with the royal sceptre, nor did the ministry think that the gorgon head of an ecclesiastical body

¹ Historic Register for 1727, page 175.

would petrify the infidels; so that the vigorous policy of the preceding reign was still pursued, and the members of the convocation were scarcely warm on their benches before they were politely told to "go and feed the few sheep which they had left in the wilderness." Never, indeed, was prince less priest-ridden than George the second, for he evidently proved that he thought it no infelicity to have his subjects' affection divided among various ministers of religion, which might prevent his throne from ever being shaken by the insolence of a dominant hierarchy. He was, besides, too great a lover of tranquillity to expose himself, or his kingdom, to the vexation of the ecclesiastical broils, which had often arisen in the clerical parliament; while he was too sincerely attached to dissenters and toleration to admit the hazard of injuring both by the proposed interference of the clergy to crush the errors which then abounded. The arians, socinians, sceptics, and deists were therefore left to fall by weapons more formidable than the fulminations of a clerical assembly, which would have alarmed only the friends of truth and freedom, while the infidels would have been confirmed in their hatred and contempt of a system, which they would have said threatened when it should argue, and cursed where it ought to bless.

But while the true method of defending truth was too little understood, the efforts of error were certainly shameless and incessant. The grand jury of the county of Middlesex having presented two infidel books to the court of King's Bench; their conduct was severely condemned in a pamphlet, entitled, "Remarks upon two late Presentments of the Grand Jury, wherein are shown the folly and injustice of

men's persecuting one another for difference of opinion in matters of religion, and the ill consequences wherewith that practice must affect any state in which it is encouraged, by John Wickliffe." The grand jury afterwards presented these remarks upon them, observing, that "the said author avowedly contends for a liberty to write in behalf of infidelity, and has, in violation of good manners, decency, and law, stigmatized the said late presentments as foolish and unjust, and branded them with the odious name of persecution. We therefore, notwithstanding the insolent defiance which late presentments of this nature have met with, and the discouragement which we apprehend may still make them, and all others, unsuccessful, unless supported by this honourable court, do present the said pamphlet as an impious and scandalous libel, tending to the subversion of our religion, laws, and liberties, and hope this honourable court will give proper directions for punishing the author, printer, and publisher."

Dissenters, or rather puritans and nonconformists, had formerly been the only advocates for freedom of opinion; but now that they were in the quiet enjoyment of the liberty for which they had suffered and bled, a new host, of a different genius, arose, under the shade of their toleration, to vex and torture those who loved to breathe only the stagnant air of cold indifference, or servile deference to established creeds. By the tone of the grand jury, it seems that the infidels pleaded for unrestrained freedom of sentiment in a more bold and dangerous style than had ever been adopted by the puritans. In the course of the government of the world, it is frequently seen, that

^v *Historical Register for 1729, page 54.*

if men will not learn truth and justice from the voice of wisdom and benevolence, they shall be compelled to hear it from terror and defiance, and that they who will not be taught by the rod of gentle correction shall be disciplined with scorpions. From this time, unbelievers have availed themselves of toleration, to attempt, by various methods, the overthrow of those truths, for the sake of which the first independents accounted religious freedom dearer than life. The increase of deists, however, has, in some respects, tended to perpetuate and diffuse a tolerant spirit; for while secret or avowed infidels have filled the highest offices, they have insensibly put out of countenance the rigid high-church priest, and rendered it as unfashionable as it is absurd, impolitic, and iniquitous to attempt to bind the intellect in chains. Because the first advocates for toleration were Christians, mortified to the world, it was fashionable to hate them and their doctrines; but when they had, by the hazard and the sacrifice of all that was dear to men in this life, secured their mental liberties, they were succeeded in the inestimable birth-right by men of the world, who, unencumbered with any conscientious scruples, which would impede the progress of their party, were admired for that charming indifference to religion, which will always fascinate a world at enmity with God. The Christian advocates for toleration may, therefore, repeat to the deist the words of their Redeemer: "other men have laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify against the deeds thereof, that they are evil." There is, we hope, but little danger of seeing the world governed by speculative and avowed infi-

dels, as it has too frequently been by the bigots to a false and intolerant religion, or who could assure us that deists would be more tender of the rights of conscience than monks? During the period of which we write, however, the increase of those who were incredulous to the evidences of the Christian system threw a powerful weight into the scale of toleration, and contributed to render the reign of George the second favourable to the rights of conscience.

But a more pleasing occurrence, of a nature totally opposite to the former, now marked the progress of religious liberty, of which it contributed to extend and perpetuate the dominion. The rise of the methodists displayed the happy difference between the state of the public mind at this time, and during the struggles of the puritans and nonconformists. When the Wesleys and Whitefield, with their coadjutors, began to attract public notice, both by the ardour of their zeal in the cause of religion, and by the novelty and boldness which they employed for its diffusion, they professed to be true sons of the church of England; so that they properly came within the jurisdiction of the bishops, to whose government they were attached. They commenced their extra parochial meetings in the rooms of the societies for reformation of manners, which had been patronised by the government and the first authorities in the established hierarchy; but as these assemblies soon assumed an appearance which they, who were called the regular clergy could not view with a favourable eye, the methodists were made to feel that they were obnoxious to their diocesans, who regarded them as dangerous schismatics. To have shewn that episcopacy was not what the dissenters represented it, a

mere non-entity, as to all effective spiritual regulation of the church, the bishops should have summoned these anomalous churchmen to their bar, and after examining the tenets and practices of methodism, either condemned it as an ebullition of fanaticism and error, or honoured it with their sanction as an auspicious revival of primitive zeal. But the days of Laud and the Star Chamber were gone by, and while the wiser part of the spiritual authorities had no wish to try the hazardous experiment of reviving ancient methods of ecclesiastical restraint, those who were less prudent and tolerant were prevented by the temper of the prince and the spirit of the times, from adopting such coercive measures as might reduce the new zealots within the bounds of a tame regularity. The bishops, therefore, can scarcely be accused of having fallen into the error of their predecessors, by driving the methodists out of the establishment, and thus compelling them to form a new communion; for their lordships did little more than look on with jealous eyes, and give that tone to the rest of the clergy, which soon led to the expulsion of the irregulars from the churches of all those who looked for preferment.

Whitefield, finding himself shut out of the pulpits in which he was expected to appear, seized the opportunity to preach in the open air. But though he praised the heavens as the best sounding board, he found that a better roof was needed to screen his hearers from the rain and snow which soon compelled them to seek some tent, or tabernacle, or temporary building, where he might preach, whenever an English sky should forbid him to take the field. In these buildings, the methodists were exposed to the insults of the rude mob, who had not yet forgotten

the art of disturbing conventicles, nor entirely lost the relish of those delights which they enjoyed, when terrifying the women, or children whom they found in those assemblies. It, therefore, became necessary for the new sectarists, either to endure all the injuries which the non-conformists suffered for near thirty years, when they were considered as outlaws, or to contradict their solemn professions of indissoluble union with the established church, by classing themselves with dissenters, taking refuge under the toleration act, registering their places of worship, and licensing their preachers, as that act required. They were not so in love either with persecution or the church of England, as to hesitate long between the unequal alternatives; but instantly became dissenters in the eye of the law, in order to become Christians according to the dictates of conscience.

Even the moravians were driven to adopt the same expedient. This singular people had long associated with different reformed communions, on the continent of Europe, and had usually dwelt secure under the protecting wing of the established church; so that when introduced into England, a land of freedom and toleration, it seemed not unreasonable to look for the same liberality. As the brethren retained the office of a bishop, with the use of a liturgy, they were by no means disposed to set up as a sect separate from the English establishment; but would gladly have been allowed to wait upon her as a tender nurse to her children, and, without disputing the parental claims of the original mother, to cherish them in a warmer bosom, and feed them at fuller breasts than she could furnish. This, however, being rejected with disdain, the moravians were compelled, by the

disturbances to which they were exposed, to flee to the shelter which protects all those who are by law considered protestant dissenters.

It was, indeed, a curious phenomenon to behold whole host of persons who rejected the name of dissenters as an unfounded calumny, who professed themselves the truest sons of the church, attached to her doctrines, ceremonies, and hierarchy, many of whom retained, even in their conventicles, her liturgy and vestments, and who still communicated at her altars, yet resorting for protection, to "an act passed to exempt persons dissenting from the church of England from certain pains and penalties." Had they professed to dissent, it would have been a question whether the toleration act could have afforded them legal protection; for neither this, nor any other law could be intended to provide for all possible futurity, and to gather under its wing every sect, whatever principles or practices, which might arise in the revolutions of ages. But when the methodists declared they were not dissenters, how could they claim the advantages of an act made to protect persons dissenting from the church of England from the penalties of certain laws?

Yet, such was the liberality of the times, during the beneficent reign of George the second, that whenever any people chose to ask the protection of the toleration act, the courts of law kindly considered them as dissenters, and defended them in the quiet enjoyment of their principles and worship. Had not this more silent and prudent measure been adopted, justice and liberty seemed to demand that an act should be passed to defend the new sects from the unauthorised violence of the mob, and to rescue the

from the degrading and perilous condition of holding their religion by mere sufferance, liable to be persecuted, whenever a change of the prince or his ministers should produce an inclination to rob them of their dearest enjoyments. It would have been hard to punish them, because they did not choose to call themselves dissenters, and to reward their lingering fondness for their old parent by leaving them naked and defenceless. But the introduction of a new act would have been a delicate and difficult affair, which might have occasioned so much noise as to create the most imminent hazard of raising the evil spirit, which might not be easily laid again. The politic conduct of the government, in choosing rather to give a large and liberal interpretation to the toleration act, was a grand step in the progress of religious liberty; for it converted this law into a much more extensive and mighty blessing than it was ever designed to be. Presbyterians, independents, baptists, and quakers, were the persons for whom the act was made: but from the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty, it became an asylum, not only for every new sect which might separate from the establishment, but for all her own children, who chose occasionally to play a truant part, and, like mendicant friars, to be at home or abroad, in the church or the world, as best suited their convenience. Almost a century having elapsed since this generous construction has been put upon the law, it seems to have become the legal interpretation of its sense and intent; so that we may say, not that the toleration has thus attained its true bounds, but that it has hereby become boundless in extent, however defective it may yet be in degree.

As the methodists of every class, those who still remained within the walls of the establishment—those who, like Whitefield, retained her doctrines, but broke loose from her restraints, and those who, with Wesley, adopted the arminian creed, all formed a body as active as they were new, they put the practical liberality of the government and the nation to a severe test. The dissenters had long settled down to a determinate character and conduct, their congregations were now well known in the various towns where they were settled, and their principles did not lead to itinerant excursions beyond their own vicinity, so that as they and the government were considered fast friends, they were but little disturbed. The methodists, on the contrary, came forth as a foreign army—they traversed the kingdom through all its extent professing to belong to the establishment, they entered into its precincts, sought their converts in its very bosom, and thus roused attention, jealousy, and rage, by the novelty, nearness, and anomalous singularity of their attack. The practice of field preaching which Whitefield, their most intrepid champion, introduced, was a measure as daring as it was unprecedented. When the government heard that this wild son of the church drew out of London, the almost incredible number of thirty thousand persons to hear him preach on Kennington common; when he regularly collected numbers, not much inferior, in Moorfields; when the cautious Wesley imitated the bold measure, and thus rendered it a methodist fashion to stand upon Tower-hill, in the streets of Bristol, amidst the colliers at Kingswood, or Newcastle, the miners of Cornwall, or wherever else immense crowds could be collected; would it have been surprising, if the

usual jealousy of governments had been displayed by the new dynasty, which had but just begun to sit firm on the British throne? What, then, must have been the wisdom of the prince, and the conscious strength and dignity of the government, that in such untried and critical circumstances, the *laissez nous faire* prevailed without limitation, and the rising sect not only gave neither alarm nor offence to the civil powers, but was even defended by the sword and the mace? Whenever the mobs were excited by their own depraved passions, or by the insidious arts of gothic gentry, or clergy, to disturb the worship of the methodists, though inferior magistrates might hesitate to give redress, the superior courts were a sure refuge, where, not scanty justice, but liberal countenance was afforded to the new species of dissenters. At Bristol, the magistrates instantly quelled the persecuting spirit of the populace, and placed the methodists in perfect peace and security. If the London mob was more violent, the persecuted people received the satisfaction of being informed from high authority, before they made application for redress, that they had no need to suffer the insults and injuries which they experienced since the justices of the peace had received particular orders from the government to afford them full protection. The house of Hanover, being assured of the affections of the dissenters, regarded them as among the firmest supporters of the throne: it is, therefore, not improbable, that this new accession to their numbers was far from being disagreeable to the court, which gladly extended to the methodists, the protection originally designed for other denominations.

The infant sects thus quietly stepped into the

enjoyment of privileges for which others had long struggled, suffered, groaned, and bled. The liberty of worship, purchased by the dissenters at the price of ages of cruel persecution, the lives of ten thousands of their brethren, who perished in prisons, and the sacrifice of property to an incalculable amount, became at once the inheritance of a people, many of whom were little sensible of their obligations to those of whose labours they now tasted the sweet fruits. Hence the new denominations have never yet been tried, to prove whether they possess the same inextinguishable vital spark as, in the breasts of the regular dissenters, bade defiance to the floods of persecution. The occasional violence of the mob, against which it was known that the government would afford them ample protection, was no test of the spirit of martyrdom, compared with that long and systematic oppression which the nonconformists endured from the heavy arm of power; nor can it be now ascertained, whether, if the government had resorted to the same treatment towards the methodists, they would not have sunken under it, into complete annihilation. Not having, like the independents or quakers, any definite principles, which should make it a sacred duty to hold meetings separate from those in the parochial edifices, it is probable that the different sects of methodists owe their present existence to the circumstance of their growing up at the side of the dissenters, under the shade of their toleration, cherished by the liberal maxims of government which the nonconformists had contributed to establish.

The methodists, however, having just emerged from the bosom of an exclusive establishment, owed more thanks to religious liberty, than she owes to

them. George Whitefield, indeed, was a man of a generous soul, which quickly felt and justly appreciated the worth of his dissenting predecessors in the glorious work to which he consecrated his life. But John Wesley presents us with a perfect contrast; for, though he preferred his mother, who inherited the good spirit of her nonconformist ancestors, to his father, who was a convert to high-church bigotry, he loved and inculcated the principles of his father, while he acted upon those of his mother. It was his constant care to carry the narrowness of the establishment into his new species of dissent, and in order to keep his societies from sinking into dissenting churches, which his perspicacity instantly perceived to be their natural tendency, he not only framed a connective code of discipline, which should supply a centripetal, to counteract the centrifugal force, but he also breathed a subtle ether through the system, by diffusing dark suspicions of the dissenters, whose blood had purchased the liberty which he was glad to enjoy. So far, therefore, as the spirit of the Wesleyans is concerned, liberality in religion gained but little from their rise; yet, in an indirect and unintentional way, the most happy and powerful effects grew out of the new separation from the established church. In addition to the very liberal interpretation given to the ecclesiastico-civil code of jurisprudence in our country, a powerful weight was thrown into the scale of practical dissent, vast numbers were added to the advocates for worship separate from the parochial assemblies, and a host of preachers unconsecrated by episcopal hands, not only published their doctrines, but administered the sacraments of religion through the kingdom. Great multitudes thus

became dissenters, without knowing or intending it; for, instead of the prejudices which were before awakened by the sight of the conventicle, it now appeared perfectly practicable to adopt all the essentials of dissent, and yet remain good churchmen, among a people who professed to love the church, but decidedly imitated the dissenters. A favourable change was also produced in the tone of high church men, who now frequently affected to be converted to a good opinion of those who, upon principle 'dissented from the episcopal church, and adopted sentiments nearly allied to the regular establishment of Scotland; while they inveighed bitterly against those fanatics, who set up their altars in opposition to a church, to which they pretended to be conscientiously attached. Thinking that the older sects were now grown sober, the establishment complimented them at the expence of the new apostates, who attempted to engraft all the wild ardour of a recent discovery, upon the established vigour of the dissenting stock. Thus religious liberty gained on every hand, and the dissenters hail even the most contracted of the new sects as valuable, though unintentional, coadjutors in the contest of voluntary churches, and the rights of private judgment in religion, against the intolerance of a dominant hierarchy, and the claims of exclusive establishments.

The rise of the methodists, however, put the liberality of the dissenters to a severe test. Accustomed to regard themselves as the asylum of all those who renounced the errors or the restraints of the establishment, they now beheld other communions rising up to share with them the same honours. What impartial judge of human nature will wonder, that the

elder sects should look with the jealousy which accompanies strangeness upon a people emerging from the establishment, without professing to differ from it, and yet combining this unaccountable latitude with a liberal quantity of high-church prejudices? When they saw Mr. John Wesley establish a dissenting hierarchy, by means of an assembly of lay preachers, of which he was himself to be the autocrat, their disapprobation arose out of their attachment to religious liberty. It appeared to them immaterial whether an ecclesiastical synod was called a conference or a convocation, if the ministers assumed a legislative authority over the people. To hear Mr. Wesley claim a supreme authority with the same language as the kings of Lombardy employ when putting on their iron crown, "God has given it me, and I shall keep it," excited in dissenters as much indignation as to hear pope Hildebrand, or archbishop Laud plead the possession of power as a reason for the exercise of dominion over the conscience. It was therefore the exuberance rather than the defect of the spirit of religious liberty which induced them to brand the leader of methodism with the title of pope John.

For Mr Whitefield and his followers the dissenters felt kinder sentiments. Though the indifference which this great man expressed for all the peculiarities of ecclesiastical order appeared to them, not only unscriptural, but founded on the enthusiastic assumption, that he was called to mind greater things; his disinterested ardour of soul in the cause of catholic Christianity, won their hearts, and induced them to forget the imperfections of the man in the excellencies of the devoted minister. He was, therefore,

welcomed to the bosoms, the abodes, and the pulpits of many, who thus proved that the peculiarities of their own communion were held in due subordination to the grand vital truths of religion. Such phenomena of liberality were then exhibited, as the world would never before have thought credible ; an independent pastor, educated at the regular academy of Homerton preaching in the chapel of a clergyman, where the liturgy enjoined by the act of uniformity, was read by a lay curate in a surplice.

These discordant materials could not coalesce without some previous collision. Where the spirit of religion was decaying in a dissenting church, they sometimes made their differences of opinion a pretext for illiberal conduct towards Mr. Whitefield ; who, in his turn, gave them too much provocation by imprudent and unfounded reflections on the niceties of a system of which he had studied neither the nature nor the evidence. If Christian prudence induced some faithful ministers to stand aloof, till they could see the lawfulness of welcoming these new lights, Whitefield's youthful ardour too frequently branded them, though his superiors in knowledge and experience, with the odious character of dead formalists, who were feeding their flocks with the chaff of church government, instead of the nutritious doctrines of grace. When, however, his maturer judgment detected the error, he acknowledged it with an ingenuousness, which little minds would have thought a degradation, but which added to the lustre of his meridian, the enchanting mildness of a setting sun. Alluding to Peter's injudicious zeal in cutting off the ear of the high-priest's servant, he said, " many a man's ear have I cut off, by harsh

censures on those who were faithful ministers of Christ." The re-action which these mistaken censures naturally produced, might give to the dissenters the appearance of illiberality towards the rising sects, but when all circumstances are considered, they will be found to have been as thoroughly imbued with the genuine spirit of religious liberty, as we can reasonably expect to find men in this state of imperfection*.

The increased disapprobation of all national establishments in religion tended at once to fortify the attachment of dissenters to religious liberty, and to weaken their antipathy to the particular faults of the church of England. Many of them, beginning now to consider the connection of a church with the state, as the mark of "the harlot who commits fornication with the kings of the earth," deemed it an idle warfare to contend with one who held such an illicit connection about the lesser blemishes of her person or character. Their opposition was thus purified from the most envenomed of the passions, envy at the happier state of the established church; for they now congratulated themselves on their escape from this gilded chain; while they divided their censures, by levelling a part of them at the presbyterian establishment of Scotland, as only a few degrees less corrupt than the episcopal church of England. In his controversy with Dr. Snape, James Pierce challenges the high church party to prove that Christ had in the New Testament, prescribed any national establishment of religion.

The dissenters stood forth as the advocates of un-

* Dr. Watts recommended count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in a letter to his brethren in America.

restrained liberty of conscience in the controversy with Woolston, the deist. Having attacked him with the only weapons which they deemed lawful in this warfare, when they observed some of his antagonists among the churchmen shake the sword over his head, and threaten him with civil penalties, they protested against recurring to such methods, which would in their view, snatch the honours of victory from the Christian cause. The celebrated Lardner, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-nine, wrote "a Vindication of our blessed Saviour's Miracles," in answer to Woolston, and embraced this opportunity of protesting against the prosecution, by which the infidel was condemned in one year's imprisonment, and a fine of one hundred pounds. Lardner observes in his preface, that if men be permitted to deliver their sentiments freely on the subject of religion, and to propose their objections against Christianity itself, there can be no reason to be in pain for the event. "On the side of Christianity," says he, "I expect to see, as hitherto, the greatest share of learning, good sense, true wit, and fairness of disputation, which things, I hope, will be superior to low ridicule, false argument, and misrepresentation." He irresistably proves, that all force on the minds of men in affairs of religious belief, is contrary to religion itself, and pernicious to the cause which it is intended to serve. Dr. Waddington, bishop of Chichester, expostulated with Lardner concerning these sentiments. But after the interchange of a few letters, he seemed to concede to the dissenter the principle in debate. Mr. Simon Brown, another dissenting minister, wrote against Woolston, "a fit Rebuke for a ludicrous In-

✓ Lardner's Life.

fidel," with a preface concerning the prosecution of such writers by the civil powers. This preface was a noble apology for liberty of conscience, and of the press, and a severe condemnation of civil prosecutions for matters of opinion. Dr. Doddridge also published, in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-six, a sermon on "the absurdity and iniquity of Persecution for conscience sake, in all its forms and degrees." It had been preached on the fifth of November, and was recommended to the public, in a preface by Mr. Larne, as the best he had ever seen on the subject, in so narrow a space. Dr. Kippis also pronounces it, an elaborate and excellent discourse, displaying with great energy and elegance, the grand principles of toleration and religious liberty.

The quakers, encouraged by the success of former applications, and confident of the liberal views of the king, made, in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-five, a grand, but unsuccessful effort to obtain legislative relief from some modes of persecution which they still endured. The first act of king William by which their affirmation was admitted instead of an oath, contained also a clause which pointed out an easier and less expensive method of recovering small sums for tythes and church-rates. Yet as the act did not prohibit the clergy from applying to the more oppressive prosecutions in the exchequer and ecclesiastical courts, too many were unhappily disposed to adopt the mode which put the quakers to most trouble and expense. The friends, therefore, drew up a statement of their case, and a petition, which they presented to the parliament. They shewed that above eleven hundred of

their body had been prosecuted in the exchequer and spiritual courts, that nearly three hundred of them had been committed to prison, that several had died there, and that above eight hundred pounds had been taken from ten persons, where the original demands upon them all did not amount to fifteen pounds.

In compliance with their petition, a bill was brought into the House of Commons, not to take from the clergy any thing which they claimed, but to compel them to resort to less expensive modes of recovering what they considered their due. "The clergy," says Gough, "now mustered all their strength against the bill for relief to the friends, whereby they manifested themselves no less eager to hold fast the power of oppression which the law had left them in the recovery of tythes, than the tythe itself²." On this subject were published three anonymous pamphlets, which were all attributed to mitred heads. But Dr. Edmund Gibson, bishop of London, who for his *codex juris ecclesiastici*, was considered the champion of the clergy, wrote, as is supposed, the most able piece, entitled, "the country Parson's Plea against the Quaker's Bill for Tythes." It was answered by one who styled himself a member of the House of Commons, but was found afterwards to be lord Hervey. As the bishop had admitted that no wise or good clergymen would adopt any other method than that prescribed by the intended bill, lord Hervey argues, that, if the wisest and best use it of choice, the unreasonable and unjust should be driven to it by necessity: for it would be a miserable case to have no

² Gough's II

sion than the wisdom and goodness of clergymen." In addition to the pamphlets, circular letters were addressed to the clergy, which produced petitions from them against the bill. Lord Hervey's Answer to the country Parson contends, that the bill should pass, were it only to prove, that it is not in the power of a mitred doctor, by his letters missive stirring up petitions from every diocese, to intimidate a House of Commons, in a matter of this high concern to the justice of the kingdom. "I hope," says he, "a body of Englishmen will never weigh petitions in quantity against any bill whatever, especially bills for the reformation of the church, against which they are certain of having as many remonstrances as there are deaneries, archdeaconries, chapters, colleges, or ecclesiastical precincts in England and Wales." Counsel was heard in behalf of the petitioners against the act, and several alterations were proposed, when, after a vigorous resistance, the bill passed through the House of Commons.

The opposition was renewed with increased eagerness among the peers. Petitions were presented, and counsel was employed against the act, but the friends of the measure took care that counsel should be heard also in its favour. When the grievances of the quakers appeared too evident to be denied, and too serious to be slighted, the adversaries of toleration affected to consider the bill, as it came from the commons, incorrect, and unfit to pass into a law; and by this artifice, they succeeded in throwing it out. In the disgraceful majority, were fifteen bishops; and two of these, my lords of London and Sarum, having exerted themselves vigorously against the proposed relief to the quakers, they received the public thanks

of their clergy, "for their care and vigilance, in maintaining the constitution of the church of England in its present happy establishment, and the legal rights of the clergy against the late strange and unheard-of infringement of their rights." When it is remembered that the quakers were not so bold as to apply for exemption from tythes, but asked only for an act which should prevent unreasonable and bitter men from recurring to those modes of obtaining their demands which were ruinous to the friends, it should seem that those clergymen, who were so grateful to the bishops, judged the power of carrying on persecuting lawsuits, one of the "just rights of the church." The failure of the measure produced, between the clergy and the quakers, a controversy, which was maintained with great asperity for a long time; the clergy asserting, that their opponents had falsely aspersed them, without being able to make good their accusations of litigious and oppressive suits; while the friends maintained, that their persecutors were fully convicted of conduct which would expose any men, much more the ministers of religion, to universal indignation and contempt. Lord Hervey affirmed that such facts were substantiated, as would be a just reason for abolishing tythes, if suits for them could not be carried on by more humane methods.

In the early part of the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-six, a motion was made in the House of Commons for the repeal of those clauses in the test act, which excluded protestant dissenters from civil employments. The attempt failed; for though the king was favourable to it, his ministers durst not countenance the measure, lest, to the popular odium which taxation had already

excited, they should have added the more inflammatory cry of danger to the church. A repetition of the attempt in the next session of parliament was attended, as every judicious person must have expected with a renewed failure. Notwithstanding these retrograde movements, so much mildness and good sense prevailed in the senate as abolished the laws against conjuration and witchcraft, which had, for ages, exposed the miserable objects of suspicion to the most brutal treatment, for crimes of which no legal proof could be furnished.

But that which most alarmed the friends of liberty, and, in the end, most contributed to establish its dominion, was the rebellion in the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-five. The exiled Stewarts, who had ever been the dupes of the catholic princes, were again thrown upon our shores, as an apple of discord, to divide our attention, and procure a diversion in favour of the enemy. The young pretender, as he was called, or the son of the *soi-disant* James the third, landed in Scotland when there were no hopes of shaking the throne of his rival; and with all the silly fondness for royal pomp, which characterized his family, wasted his precious moments of unexpected prosperity in proclaiming his father, and disposing of seats in the paradise which he had not yet regained. Having, in the battle of Preston Pans, beaten the British force which was sent against them, the rebel army marched into England, and, by an unaccountable coincidence of circumstances, arrived within a hundred miles of London, which was thrown into the utmost consternation.

While the civil and religious liberties of our country were thus exposed to jeopardy, it was

natural for the government to look around with the keen eye of jealousy, to see which way men's hearts turned. After the storm was dispelled by the victory of Culloden, the dissenters were elevated in the esteem of the government. The rebellion called forth all their ardour in the cause of liberty, both civil and religious. They were agitated with an indescribable solicitude for the safety of the tolerant throne of Brunswick, and the preservation of that liberal constitution, under which they had, for half a century, enjoyed those blessings which ought to be dearest to immortal beings. The sermons of the pastors, and the prayers of the churches, spoke the lively interest which they had felt in the success of the contest. Dr. Doddridge exerted himself with great zeal, and at considerable expense, in a cause which appeared to him to affect the Christian as deeply as the patriot. His biographer says, "When a regiment was raising in Northamptonshire, to be under the command of the earl of Halifax, he wrote many letters to his friends in that county and neighbourhood to further the design. He went among his own people to encourage them to enlist, and had the pleasure to find many of them engaging cheerfully in the cause. He drew up, and printed at his own expense, a friendly letter to the private soldiers of a regiment of foot, which was one of those engaged in the glorious battle of Culloden^a." When his friend colonel Gardiner fell in the struggle between the house of Hanover and the family of Stewart, Dr. Doddridge honoured him as one who had poured out his blood for the sacred as well as civil liberties of Britons. It was his high sense of the importance of

^a Orton's Life of Doddridge, page 208.

the contest to the religious interests of the kingdom, which inspired the biographer with the unusual eloquence which glows in his memoirs of the colonel. Watts and Doddridge both employed their poetic talents in hymns, which were designed to aid the patriotic devotion of the dissenters, and express their grateful confidence in the protection of heaven to the righteous cause of freedom.

In the midst of that internal tranquillity, which his paternal administration secured, and of that national superiority, which Britain will, probably, ever enjoy, in proportion as she is free and united, died George the second, on the twenty-fifth of October, in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty, in the thirty-third year of his reign, at the advanced age of seventy-seven. He trode in his father's best steps, and with a fidelity, equalled only by his prudence, maintained the principles which seated his family on the throne. Thus our country enjoyed, for the first time, two successive reigns of sovereigns who, superior to the bigotry of a dominant sect, defended, with firm and impartial hand, the religious privileges of all their subjects. George the second steadily aimed at restoring to the dissenters the rights of which he was convinced they were unjustly deprived; but he ever found himself thwarted by the gothic prejudices of those who would exalt the prince's will into a law, except when he wished to do justice to others at the expence of their monopoly. It was the glory of this prince to have stood a test which has generally proved too severe for those who have worn a crown—the rise of a new, active, and prosperous sect of religionists. Excepting, perhaps, the quakers, who have little rea-

son to complain of Oliver Cromwell, every dissenting communion had found, to its cost, that princes are alarmed at what they deem a new religion ; but the methodists owe unrivalled honours to the memory of George the second, who chained up the dragon, which lies watching the birth of each new denomination, to devour it while young and feeble.

CHAPTER III.

CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE DISSENT.

By the friends of dissent, the controversy on the separation from the church of England will be considered as of importance, both to their character and conduct; and they will naturally expect, in a history of dissenters, to see some account of the champions by whom their principles were attacked, and the champions by whom they were defended. If those only were to be mentioned who lived after the revolution, the statement would be incomplete, because the controversy had been agitated for a century before. It appears, therefore, most proper to begin from its commencement, and exhibit a brief sketch of the principal writers on both sides, down to the close of the second period.

Whether uniformity be a possible thing, in a country where liberty of conscience is enjoyed, may be justly doubted: at least no instance of the kind occurs in the annals of the Christian church. But if it is possible, it must be by means very different from those which have been yet pursued. If union of mind and heart in the grand principles of the Gospel were esteemed a sufficient bond, many who now remain at an awful distance from each other, might, while they still retained their peculiarities in inferior matters, unite in worship and communion, live in the delightful exercise of the most cordial

brotherly affection, and, "whereunto they had all attained, mind the same things."

Widely different has been the mode of proceeding in almost every church, whether established by authority, or tolerated by indulgence. Instead of opening a gate for Christians as such to enter in, and join with them in their profession of religion, they have fastened strong and high pallisades close to the gate of their temple, leaving only a narrow wicket through which none were allowed to pass, but such as could say *shibboleth* to their satisfaction, and would adopt all the peculiarities of the party. Long creeds, or confessions of faith, or articles of religion were framed, embracing a multitude of dogmas relating to doctrine, government, and discipline, of every tittle of which, each person who wished for admission, must explicitly declare his firm belief. Such, alas, has been the practice in England, from the reformation to the present hour: and those who have not been able to subscribe *ex animo* to all that is contained in the articles, the liturgy, &c. &c. have been compelled either to set their hand to what they did not believe, or to remain without the pale of the English church.

The ecclesiastical establishment at the reformation, was supposed to be for the use of all the inhabitants of the land; and every individual was considered as bound to conform to its regulations. Like Luther, the English reformers do not seem to have searched the Scriptures for the mode of church government which it contains or warrants; but to have adopted that which was in use in the worst times of popery, and with a very few alterations, to have framed and fitted it to their new ecclesiastical constitution. Calvin appears to have been the first, and indeed the

Only one of the heads of the reformation, who made it his business to enquire what was the decision of the holy Oracles on this important subject. The result of his inquiries was a system of presbyterian church government, which in his eyes was deemed to be "according to the pattern shewn in the mount," and was the model exhibited and used by the apostles in the churches planted by their hands.

His scheme, whether from their own researches, or from their perusal of Calvin's works, met the approbation of some of the first friends of the reformation in this country : and in the reign of Edward the sixth, the difference began to appear. When queen Mary's persecution had compelled the warmest patrons of the glorious cause to seek refuge on the continent among foreign protestants, the exhibition of Calvin's simpler mode of worship and government won the entire affections of many, and they became proselytes to presbytery. On their return, the more pompous ritual of the Anglican church was beheld with dislike; and from that period two parties appeared in the bosom of the establishment. There were some who did not go so far, but embraced what was afterwards archbishop Usher's scheme of episcopacy: they, however agreed with the others in the essential parts of their ecclesiastical polity. By carrying their conformity as far as they could with a good conscience, these malecontents strove to live in one communion. But they also aspired after a higher degree of reformation, and by their writings, and still more by application to parliament, they sought to have the platform of the church adapted to their model. Controversy, as might be expected, was the result, and both the

friends of the hierarchy, and the puritans crowded into the field.

The priestly robes furnished one of the first subjects of contention. The puritans were unwilling to wear them; and indeed viewed them with abhorrence. The rulers of the church were as strenuous for their use, and insisted that they should be worn. The dissenters of the present day wonder that the ecclesiastical governors should have been so rigid; and those who inherit the spirit of these rulers, are astonished that the puritans should have been so weak. But if we consider the state of things at that period, reasons of considerable weight may be assigned for the conduct of the puritans, which are now generally overlooked. If, after a merry andrew had exhibited his tricks, and performed all his antic gestures, he was ordered to strip, and a clergyman was commanded to put on his fantastic apparel, and officiate at the altar, might he not be allowed to have scruples to appear in the dress of the mountebank's stage? To the costume of a false religion there might be objections equally strong. If, after the priest of Venus, at Paphos, clothed in his discriminating robes of office, had presented a sacrifice on her altar, and then committed lewdness as an act of religion, the apostle Paul had been ordered to take these robes and wear them as the appropriate dress of the Christian ministry in all his public functions while he remained at Cyprus, might he not have pleaded that it would, in the eyes of the people, identify a minister of Christ with a priest of Venus, and awaken in their minds ideas diametrically opposite to Christian purity? In both these cases good men might refuse the proffered

dresses without being exceedingly scrupulous, or remarkably weak.

The puritans conceived that they had as good reasons to alledge for their dislike of the wardrobe of the church. The garments in which they were commanded to officiate, were worn by the popish priests in the days of superstition, and were considered, both by priests and people, as essentially connected with the wonder-working parts of their office, and without which these marvels could not be done. When bishop Latimer, in the course of his degradation, on being stripped of one of his garments, said, "Now I can make no more holy water," he spoke both the sentiments of the multitude, and the sentiments of the prelates of the Romish church. If the puritans refused to wear these robes, while they are excused on the score of sobriety of mind, they may be allowed to have religious scruples on higher grounds.

Two classes of people were likely to receive injury from them. Those who still adhered to popery in their hearts, a very numerous body, and who connected the Romish robes of ecclesiastics with the Romish ritual and Romish priestly power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth. The other class consisted of those who had cordially embraced the protestant faith, and who, both from the spirit of the times, and the natural influence of persecution on the mind of the sufferer, hated popery and her priests, and the garments which they wore; and who were so disgusted with every thing in the system, that they felt the strongest prejudices rise in their breast when they saw a minister officiate in a Romish guise. Hence arose the scruples of the puritans, and their aversion to the ecclesiastical costume.

Equally strenuous on the other side, were the persons who had the power to prescribe the ghostly fashions of that day, and as queen Elizabeth was fond of show and parade, the puritans had to contend not only with the rulers of the church, but also with the head of the state. Disputations were held on the subject, but without conviction; remonstrances were made, but without effect. The press presented to the public, the labours of the disputants on both sides; but whatever might be the force of arguments, the question was decided by the arm of power. The puritans must submit, or be no longer allowed to preach the Gospel. Some of them, unable to comply with a good conscience, quitted their livings, and convinced their opponents, if, of nothing else, at least of their sincerity.

While, in the New Testament, we read nothing of any kind of garments as proper for ministers of the Gospel, how strange is it that, to a church of Christ professing to be formed on the model of the New Testament, a garment of a particular colour and of a particular form should appear so important, that, according to the rubric, a minister of that church cannot officiate without it. Could it ever have been imagined, that the taylor should be so important a personage in the church, that the cut of a robe was necessary almost to give validity to Christian ordinances; or, at least, inattention to these formalities subjected to censure the minister who would have the hardihood to officiate in a garment of a different colour or a different shape? May we not hope that the time is coming, when the littleness of mind, which laid so undue a stress on these and similar minutiae, will vanish from the Christian church; when a cordial

union in the fundamental principles of the Gospel will be all that is deemed necessary in order to Christian and ministerial communion ; and when the shape and hue of the garment in which a minister officiates, will appear of no more importance than the cut or the colour of his hair.

The complaints of the puritans did not rest here ; other alterations and indulgences were required. The stately pomp and extensive authority of diocesan bishops, the multitude of clergymen who were unable to preach, the want of discipline, and many other things in the ecclesiastical establishment, called forth their censures, and their petitions for reform. It was a bold age, and these sentiments were poured forth from the pulpit into the ears of their congregation ; and they appeared in a more legitimate form from the press. Whitgift stood forth in defence of the church, and Cartwright was the champion of the puritans. The *admonitions to parliament* drawn up by the latter body, and circulated through the country were considered as demanding an answer. Whitgift undertook the task, and performed it with great ability. Cartwright replied, with ability and learning not inferior. A defence appeared from the former ; and a second reply, in two parts, by the latter. The dispute embraced almost the whole of what is still considered as defective or objectionable in the established church. Their principles of reasoning were different : Cartwright grounded his whole system on the New Testament, and admitted no other authority : Whitgift demanded that the practice of the third and fourth centuries should be deemed a proper platform for an ecclesiastical establishment ; and he rested the weight of his arguments on this foundation. But, however

defective this might be, he had the smiles both of the civil and ecclesiastical rulers. It is a charming thing to sit down and write under the protecting shadow of a throne, while the monarch, who sits there with his sceptre in his hand, raises it against the antagonist of his champion, and threatens him with a blow which he will never forget. The person, thus menaced, must, while he is composing his book, have a part of his attention drawn to the throne, and spend some of his time in observing the monarch's hands. Such was the relative situation of Whitgift and Cartwright in this controversy. The result was what might be expected from the spirit of the times. Whitgift wrote himself into the archiepiscopal throne of Canterbury, and the palace of Lambeth: Cartwright's reward was poverty, exile, and a jail.

About twenty years afterwards, Richard Hooker stood forth as an able champion for the ecclesiastical hierarchy in all its parts. He was a fortunate man, for his convictions were favourable to his interest. The rewards, as to this world, were all on the side of the advocates for the church. A rich rectory was the smallest favour that they had to expect. The acclamations of their numerous brethren, the caresses of soft and delicate lawn sleeves, in due time a pair for themselves, and the fascinating smiles of the court which in those days raised the soul to extasies, were the certain prize of defending the establishment. His talents and learning are universally acknowledged and it has been generally allowed, that he said all that could be said in defence of the established church, and in refutation of the books of Cartwright, whom he always keeps within his view. He may be said to have dedicated his life to the subject. For this purpose, a

his own request, he was removed from the mastership of the temple to a country living; and the *ecclesiastical polity* was the result of his long, assiduous, and painful labours. It consists of eight books. Three were published in 1594, and two more in 1597. He lived till 1600 in the vigorous prosecution of his favourite theme. But the three last books were not published till more than half a century after his death. Whether the whole of these, or a part, or any of them were his, has been, among his greatest admirers, a matter of doubt^b.

The architecture of the fabric resembles Dagon's temple; it rests mainly upon two grand pillars, which, as long as they continue sound, will support all its weight. The first is, "that the church of Christ, like all other societies, has power to make laws for its well-being;" and the second, that "where the sacred Scriptures are silent, human authority may interpose." But if some Sampson can be found to shake these pillars from their base, the whole edifice, with the lords of the Philistines in their seats, and the multitude with which it is crowded, will be involved in one common ruin. Grant Mr. Hooker these two principles, and his arguments cannot be confuted. But if a puritan can show that the church of Christ is different from all civil societies, because Christ had framed a constitution for it, while he left them entirely to the exercise of their own wisdom; and that where the Scriptures are silent, and neither enjoin nor forbid, no human association has a right to interpose its authority, but should leave the matter indifferent; in such a case, the system would be not more stable than that of the philosopher, who rested the earth on the back of

^b See Life of Hooker prefixed to his works.

an elephant, and that upon a tortoise, and that on nothing, or he knew not what.

The book, we are told by Mr. Hooker's biographer^c, was rapturously extolled by cardinal Allen and Dr. Stapleton, two celebrated English papists, who strenuously recommended it to the pope, as a masterpiece of conclusive reasoning. The first book being read in his presence, his holiness was in raptures too; and he considered it as almost a miracle, that any heretic in England should write so well, and argue in so conclusive and masterly a manner. The approbation of these men, however, is not to be viewed with surprise, because Mr. Hooker used the very same arguments in contending against dissenters from the establishment, that the church of Rome employs in arguing against the separation of the church of England from her communion; and with some variation in names and dates, the book will prove the ablest defence of the popish cause. His ideas of church power, authority, and influence, went far beyond those of most of his brethren in the present day; and when his biographer informs us of his own and Mr. Hooker's veneration for ecclesiastical institutions, "and their belief of the benefit, necessity, and safety of the church's absolution," which was administered to him just before his death, we seem to feel ourselves not treading upon protestant ground^d. Nor does he appear less remote from the true spirit of the reformation, when he lays it down as one of his maxims, "that all who are born within the limits of an established church, and are baptized into it, are bound to submit to its ecclesiastical laws, under such

^c Hooker's Life, p. 18, 19.

^d Hooker's Life, p. 23.

penalties as the church in her wisdom shall determine."

Hooker was not permitted to occupy the field of controversy alone. Bilson, Bancroft, Bridges, Cosins, and Dr. Adrian Saravia, a German beneficed in England, appeared on the same side. Bradshaw defended the cause of the puritans against Bilson, Fenner against Bridges, Morrice against Cosins, and Beza against Saravia, although the press was shut against them by law, and their books could only be published by stealth.

Of the champions for the church, Bancroft acquired the greatest name by his boldly asserting the divine right of episcopacy. Most of the English reformers were Erastians, who considered the church as a creature of the state, and grounded the ecclesiastical institutions of the realm on the authority of the civil magistrate, who had appointed the bishops as his servants for the oversight of the rest of the clergy. Whitgift proceeded a step further, and defended the ecclesiastical constitution, and the order of bishops on the foundation of their conformity to the primitive church in the third and fourth centuries. It was reserved for Bancroft to assert their celestial origin. In a sermon at St. Pauls, in 1588, he maintained that the order of bishops was of divine right, and originally distinct from and superior to the office of presbyters. This was new doctrine to the ears of an English audience, and made a considerable noise at the time; but it was eagerly embraced by such as wished in one way to magnify their office, and afterwards became the favourite sentiment of all the Laudean party in the church. By the puritans, the doctrine was strenuously opposed, and the breach became wider than

before ; while at the same time, nearly all of them wished to live in the communion of the church. But the eager zeal, which the heads of the establishment and their adherents displayed for the rites and ceremonies, rendered their continuance impossible ; and during queen Elizabeth's reign, many hundreds of pious ministers were suspended, and deprived of their livings for want of conformity to the ceremonies.

In reviewing the state of the controversy during this and the two following reigns, it is impossible not to be impressed with the unhappy state of the country by reason of their religious differences. There were two remedies to which they might have had recourse, either of which would have restored peace. The first and best was to reduce the terms of conformity to an agreement in the great fundamental principles of Christianity, and to have left the parochial ministers at liberty to regulate the worship and discipline of their respective congregations, to their mutual satisfaction. Had this not been thought consistent with the unity or dignity of the Anglican church, a liberal toleration to such as could not conscientiously conform, would have set the hearts of multitudes at rest, and have effectually prevented those calamities which at last ensued. But neither of these methods was suited to the taste of the rulers of the church or state, who refused to sacrifice even a *cope* or a *rocket* to the peace of the country. For the space of fourscore years they laboured with unremitting assiduity at a third way of healing the country's wounds, which, to our astonishment, after numberless unsuccessful attempts, they could not perceive to be hopeless, namely, to reduce the whole nation by force to a

rigorous uniformity in all matters of religion, both in faith and practice.

Not satisfied with resorting to the press, conferences were held at different times, in order to decide the controversy by oral disputation. The most celebrated of these was at Hampton Court, in the beginning of James the first's reign. Several bishops and dignitaries were appointed to defend the established episcopacy. Dr. Reynolds and three other ministers appeared on the side of the puritans. The king was to preside, but forgetting the duties of his office, he took a part in the dispute, and stood forth as the zealous champion of the church. The puritans, though renowned for their learning and acuteness in the republic of theology and letters, were unaccustomed to dispute with kings, and stood in awe of majesty. To contradict crowned heads was not the fashion with Englishmen in that age. The bishops were in raptures with their advocate, and on their knees before him expressed their admiration of his wisdom, gave thanks to God for sending them such a king, who, they said, certainly spake by inspiration. The conference ended by the establishment of things as they were, and royal threatenings "that if the puritans did not speedily conform, he would hurry them out of the land, or else worse."

Publications on the subject appeared too in this reign, but few of peculiar celebrity. Bishop Moreton, Dr. Burges, Dr. Downham, Messrs. Sparkes, Covil, Hutton, Rogers, and Ball wrote in defence of the rites and ceremonies of the church. Dr. Ames, Bradshaw, Baynes, and some others were their opponents, and supported the puritan cause. A book of the greatest note on this side of the controversy,

was written about this time by David Calderwood, a Scotch minister, who found it expedient to conceal himself under the name of Edwardus Didoclavius, and which had for its title, *Altare Damascenum*. He was so much esteemed abroad, that an elegant edition of it was published in Holland almost a century afterwards. In the preface it is mentioned, that king James having perused it, was uneasy and displeased. One of the bishops coming in at the time, and learning the cause, thought to console him with the promise of confuting it. "Man," said the king, "what answer can you give: there is nothing here but Scripture, reason, and the fathers."

In the next reign, by the persuasion, and under the patronage of Laud, good bishop Hall entered the field, and produced a treatise on the divine right of episcopacy, in which he endeavours to fix it upon the same basis of apostolical institution, and to demolish the system of the puritans by demonstrating that presbyterianism had no existence for the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era; and that it owed its being to the inventive faculties of Calvin. After the worthy man had framed the work according to his judgment, it was submitted to the correction of the archbishop and his abettors, who erased some things, added others, and made such alterations, in order to exhibit and confirm their more elevated system of prelatical dignity, that when the book was afterwards attacked, he found himself unable to go all its lengths, and to stand up in support of all its principles. It is a singular infelicity for good men to be associated with persons of a different spirit. From the excellence of their character they are pushed forward to undertake a task incongenial with their nature, and which, if

left to themselves, they would have been the last to undertake.

To engage in a controversy, is generally giving the pledge for a continued warfare. When some petitions were, in 1640, presented to parliament against the hierarchy and their proceedings, bishop Hall again took up his pen, and wrote "a humble Remonstrance to the high Court of Parliament," and afterwards "a Defence of the Remonstrance," in both which he strenuously exerted himself to vindicate the authority of liturgies, and the celestial origin of diocesan episcopacy; and claimed to the prelates the sole right of ordination and spiritual jurisdiction. The parliament considering itself as the bulwark of the people's liberties, and the guardian of their privileges, was not unwilling that the other party should be heard, and that he should not turn every thing his own way. Greater freedom being now enjoyed, an answer to his ecclesiastical polemics was drawn up by five presbyterian divines, which from combining the first letter of the name and surname had the title of *Smectymnuus**. In these volumes the controversy between the episcopalians and presbyterians was fully investigated, and who ever will peruse them may make himself master of the subject.

But perhaps a more strenuous advocate on the side of episcopacy will scarcely be found than the unhappy monarch himself. Kings would do well to remember, that there are none in disputation and argument; that though it be the monarchy of the state, it is the republic of letters; and that there is no royal way to confutation and proof. While at Newcastle with the

* Stephen Marshal, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matt. Newcomen, and William Spurstow.

Scotch army, Charles had a controversy on the subject with Mr. Henderson, one of the most eminent ministers of the kirk of Scotland. When he was confined in the Isle of Wight a more ample debate took place, for the purpose of giving ease, if possible, to his conscience, that he might comply with the proposals of the parliament for his restoration to power. Several of his most eminent divines were appointed to assist him with their advice. Of this number were Drs. Juxon, Duppa, Sanderson, Turner, and Haywood. The parliament's commissioners brought with them four presbyterian ministers, Dr. Seaman, Mr. Vines, Mr. Caryl, and Mr. Marshal. They went through the whole of the controversy, but as in most instances of this way of proceeding, they ended as they began, and both parties were more deeply rivetted in their own opinions. It was an unpleasant office for the presbyterian ministers. To dispute with a king, is like disputing with the ladies. A well-bred man cannot find it in his heart to push the arguments home, and confute and vanquish a female opponent. *But in general?*

Till this time the independents had attracted but little notice in the puritan controversy. It had been almost entirely occupied by the episcopalians and presbyterians. But the independents now gradually appeared, and brought forward their distinguishing principles into public view. As their arms were of different materials, and of a different form from those which the presbyterians had used, a different kind of warfare became necessary, and many of the most destructive weapons became now entirely useless. General principles were advanced, which, if proved to be just, laid the axe to the root of the episcopal

tree, and utterly destroyed the force of arguments on which the fullest confidence had been placed.

During the commonwealth, the controversy concerning church government suffered a temporary suspension; perhaps from the more extensive enjoyment of religious liberty by those who had felt the most bitterly in former times. But the restoration, by bringing back the old order of things in all its rigour, kindled the fires of contention anew.

The Savoy conference between twenty-one of the episcopal party, and an equal number of the presbyterians, while it exhibited the talents of the disputants, did nothing to end the controversy: nor was it the intention of the ruling powers either in church or state; but appearances must be saved, and some external regard shewn for their former solemn promises in the time of their need of presbyterian help. Mr. Baxter, who took the chief part in the debate on one side, in opposition to Dr. Pearson and Dr. Gunning on the other, has favoured the world with a very particular account of this interesting conference, which instead of producing peace and union, widened the breach, and rendered the terms of conformity more severe^f.

To take notice of every publication on the subject of dissent would be tedious. Between the restoration and the revolution this controversy was the order of the day. People who were, on account of their nonconformity, suffering the loss of all things, would naturally have it much upon their minds; and when occasion was given, would write in defence both of their principles and practice. Many instances of this nature occurred from year to year; and notwith-

^f Baxter's Life and Times, part 2, p. 303—369.

standing the discouragements under which they laboured, men of talents were never wanting to defend the cause of the oppressed.

The most remarkable example of this was in 1680, when Dr. Stillingfleet, dean of St. Pauls, published a sermon which he had preached before the lord mayor, "on the Mischief of Separation." This discourse made a deep and painful impression on the minds of the nonconformists. The doctor had commenced his literary course with an excellent temper; and his "Irenicum," which appeared the year after the restoration, breathed so excellent a spirit, and proposed such moderate and healing measures, as justly to endear his name to all the friends of peace and union; and had they been adopted, would have retained nearly all the presbyterians within the bosom of the church. After the lapse of eighteen years, when it might have been supposed his heart would be still more mellowed down by the painful events that had passed before his eyes, he comes forth with great asperity and less seriousness than formerly, accuses the nonconformists of schism, a heinous crime! desires them not to complain of persecution, orders them into the church again, will not allow them to plead conscience for remaining in a state of separation, and charges them with contributing by their schismatical conduct to the increase of popery.

From the minions of the court, and the highflyers in the church, all this would have been easily borne; but they were beyond measure astonished and grieved to hear such language from the lips of a man whom they so much esteemed, at a time when they were enduring the bitterest sufferings for conscience sake, and when they were themselves also greatly

alarmed with the fears that popery was rapidly gaining ground. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if in such circumstances Dr. Stillingfleet's attack was considered by many as a wanton and unfeeling insult on them, and extremely dishonourable to himself; for, as bishop Burnet observes, "he not only retracted his *Irenicum*, but went into the humour of the high sort of people beyond what became him, perhaps beyond his own sense of things." There are days of folly in the life of man, which he ardently wishes to be erased from the page of his existence. The wisest are sometimes overtaken by them, and have reason bitterly to lament them. Such was, at this time, the fate of Dr. Stillingfleet.

But insulted and injured as the dissenters were, they would not suffer their adversaries to triumph without resistance. Mr. Baxter, Mr. Alsop, Mr. Howe, and Dr. Owen all stood forth in defence of the principles of nonconformity. Greater talents, on both sides, have never been called into the controversy during the whole period of its existence. All the acuteness and ingenuity of Baxter were exhibited in "his Answer." "The Mischief of Imposition" was the title chosen by Mr. Alsop, and displayed his extraordinary wit and keenness in aid of his arguments. Mr. Howe's "Letter written out of the Country to a Person of Quality in the City" shews his mind to be deeply affected with the unseasonable attack, but at the same time, discovers his dignity of soul, and strength of reasoning, and respect for his hot and inconsiderate adversary. But, to Dr. Owen, the praise is due of having produced the most valuable work. Stillingfleet, provoked by the answers to his

2 Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. I. p. 189

sermon, published in 1681, a quarto volume on "the Unreasonableness of Separation," in which the same principles are presented to view, and the arguments of his opponents considered. To this angry book, Dr. Owen wrote an answer, entitled, "an Inquiry into the original, Nature, &c. of evangelical Churches." The reader will here perceive those general principles which are now usually or perhaps universally held by dissenters: he states the nature and economy of a church as described in the New Testament, and proves that the sentiments as well as practice of Christians, continued the same during the two first centuries; he contrasts this with Dr. Stillingfleet's church, and points out the numerous differences from the foundation to the top stone; and then strenuously argues that a person, who is endeavouring in every thing to conform to the church of Christ, as delineated in the sacred Scriptures, cannot be guilty of schism for nonconformity to a system which is wholly of human invention. The learning, the moderation, the strength of reasoning, and the seriousness, which pervade the whole, entitle the work to pre-eminent distinction in the controversy on church government. Perhaps it was the first ample treatise on the subject which was grounded on the principles of the independents, and which, by sweeping away one half of Dr. Stillingfleet's book as irrelevant, presented at the same time a mode of attack, which the weapons, used by the episcopalians against the presbyterians, were not fitted to resist^b. Dr Rule, another

^b The similarity of Dr. Campbell's reasoning and statement of the form and order of the primitive church, in his lectures on ecclesiastical history is exceedingly striking. If he had not seen Dr. Owen's book, the coincidence is very remarkable, and displays the harmony of two superior minds in the investigation of the same subject.

eminent nonconformist minister, more minutely investigated every point of "the Unreasonableness of Separation," in his "rational Defence of Nonconformity." Nor were these the whole; various treatises on the dissent, which the confined limits of this work prevent from noticing, appeared about the same time. But it would be injustice to pass by "the Conformists' Plea for the Nonconformists," a work which does the greatest honour both to the writer's understanding and his heart.

A few years afterwards, three volumes were published on this controversy by some of the ablest of the clergy in the establishment, Dr. Scott, Dr. Claget, and others, in order to reclaim dissenters to the church. They were entitled "the London Cases," and contained twenty-three discourses on the leading points of difference. Mr. Delaune's answer to one of them brought him first to Newgate, and from Newgate to the grave. The two discourses on church communion were replied to by Nathaniel Taylor.

During James the second's reign, the controversy appears to have been suspended by the awful uncertainty whether protestantism itself, or popery should bear sway in the British isle. But in the year immediately succeeding the revolution, Mr. Baxter, who was from the beginning a champion of the dissenting body, and had written various treatises on the subject, closed the whole with a quarto volume entitled, "the English Nonconformity as under King Charles the second, and King James the second, stated and argued." His biographer says, that this work remained without an answer.

Though there were skirmishes from year to year, the next regular campaign of the controversy on the

dissent was not till the beginning of the eighteenth century. Dr. Edmund Calamy, wishing to preserve from oblivion the names and characters of the nonconformist ministers, published brief memoirs, and where these could not be obtained, the mere names of those who had quitted the establishment for conscience sake. By way of introduction, he abridged the life of Richard Baxter drawn up by himself, who had interwoven in it the history of the times in which he lived¹. In the tenth chapter of the abridgment, Dr. Calamy enumerated the reasons given by the ejected ministers for their nonconformity. These reasons he placed in as strong a light as he possibly could. Indeed a historian of the dissenters would not be doing them justice, if he did not present their arguments in the strongest and most striking point of view.

Two clergymen of the establishment, Dr. Hoadly and Mr. Olyffe, dissatisfied with the reasons of dissent, appeared in defence of their church ; the former

¹ Dr. Calamy rendered an important service to the dissenting cause by his abridgment of "Mr. Baxter's Life and Times," a work replete with valuable information. Into a second volume he collected a list of the names of the ejected ministers, with brief biographical sketches, where they could be procured. Some years afterwards, he was enabled, by diligent researches, to produce two volumes of additions to the names and lives. A new edition of this work, altered, in some parts abridged, and much improved, was printed in two large octavo volumes in 1774. For this, the religious world is indebted to the Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, who, in 1801, published a third edition in three volumes, with additions and improvements. The portraits of many of these excellent men give a pleasing interest to the pious reader. If, to blend entertainment with spiritual instruction, be a recommendation to a book, few will be found more effectually to have accomplished the object, than the "Nonconformists' Memorial."

is well known in the ecclesiastical and political world : both were low churchmen and of great respectability of character. Dr. Hoadly had been accustomed to a different warfare ; but he now hung up in the hall the proof armour which he formerly wore, when he contended with the high church party ; and took down an old suit which had remained there for ages, and which all the champions of Rome used to put on, when they entered into single combat against the reformers, and such as maintained their distinguishing principles. As Dr. Calamy's tenth chapter, which contains nearly all the reasons of dissent, was the subject in debate, the disputants went over nearly the whole of the controversy. Every point was contested with great vigour. Dr. Hoadly's work was entitled, " the Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England, in two parts." He afterwards returned to the charge, and published " a Defence of episcopal Ordination." Mr. Olyffe's " Defence of ministerial Conformity to the Church of England," appeared about the same time.

To these two opponents, Dr. Calamy wrote an answer in one publication, to which he gave the title of " a Defence of moderate Nonconformity." The first part appeared in 1703, and the second and third in the two following years. The objections of both on each point were considered at the same time ; and advantage was taken of the difference of their sentiments, which on some occasions served for a confutation of their hypothesis, and saved Dr. Calamy the trouble of any additional answer. To this defence, Mr. Olyffe replied in 1706 ; and here the controversy dropped. But the gentlemen had furnished the world with a full view of the arguments

on both sides, so as to enable every one to form a judgment for himself; and they had managed the controversy on the whole with tolerable temper.

The dissenters could now write on the subject of their differences from the established church, without danger or without fear; as the ruling powers had thrown away all the chains and fetters, with which before the revolution, a nonconformist could not but have his imagination haunted, while he was writing against the church. Poor Delaune's case shewed that their fears were not groundless. Dr. Calamy now proved to them, that this freedom might be enjoyed without being abused. His defence was the fullest which had for a long time appeared on the subject: and it was written with great judgment, considerable ability, and a better temper than controversy usually inspires.

Some years afterwards, Dr. William Nichols, chiefly known by his comment on the Service Book, composed in the Latin tongue, "a Defence of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Church of England." There is in some men a greediness of praise, which hurries them on to court it not only from their superiors, and their equals, but from those whom they consider to be unspeakably their inferiors, and whom they look down upon with contempt. The church of England denies the validity of the ordination of the foreign protestants, while she sustains the goodness and purity of that of the church of Rome. But so eager is Dr. Nichols for applause, that to those foreign protestants he refers his cause, solicits their approbation, and is anxious to engage them on his side. The dissenters thought it hard to be misrepresented abroad, as they had been at

come (for in this light they viewed Dr. Nichol's book), and applied to James Pierce, one of their ministers, to advocate their cause. He was prevailed on to be their champion, and in 1710, published in the Latin tongue also, "a Vindication of the Dissenters," in answer to Dr. Nichol's Defence of the Church.

For a time both these performances were shut up in a learned language, and were read only by literary men. At last Dr. Nichols began to translate his work into his native tongue; but dying before it was far advanced, a friend completed the translation, and sent it abroad into the world for the benefit of English readers. This was considered by Mr. Pierce as a signal, and a warrant for him to do the same; and thus the controversy was again brought before the public. By both these writers the same method was pursued; a historical introduction paved the way, and was followed by a defence of the principles, discipline, and worship of their respective denominations, blended with an attack on the opposite system. They went over the whole of the subject, and left nothing of importance untouched. Dr. Nichols was looked upon as a person of note in the establishment; and his opponent was regarded by the dissenters as a considerable man both for his learning and his judgment. It may indeed be questioned, whether an able book has appeared on his side of the controversy than "Pierce's Vindication of the Dissenters."

From the reformation to the death of queen Anne, the peculiar circumstances in which the puritans, nonconformists, and dissenters were placed, kept the controversy alive; and the writers had engaged in it from time to time with the spirit of men who felt the

subject. It was now almost exhausted, and scarcely a topic remained untouched. In consequence also of the dissenters enjoying the blessing of religious liberty, during the second period of this history, little comparatively was written on either side. Pamphlets might be collected in abundance; in larger works a part might be found which bore upon the subject; and some volumes, but of inferior fame, were wholly occupied by the controversy; or though ably written, containing but little that was new, have not descended to the present time with so much repute as to be in common use. One brilliant exception is to be found in the writings of White and Towgood, the former of whom was the advocate of the establishment, the latter of the dissent.

Their controversy took its rise from a cause which was never intended to produce such an effect. In 1731, Dr. Watts published a treatise under the title of "an humble Attempt towards the Revival of practical Religion among Christians." His design was to stir the dissenters up to more eminent purity of life, and more fervent zeal for the advancement of true religion. With this view he reminds them of their peculiar advantages and obligations; and strenuously and affectionately exhorts them to a temper and conduct becoming the Gospel of Christ. The book falling into the hands of John White, B. D. fellow of St. John's college, Cambridge, and vicar of Ospring, in Kent, produced a zealous advocate for the establishment, and a long succession of publications in its defence. From 1743 to 1751, no fewer than eight pieces were produced by his fertile pen. To the three first, he gave the name of "Letters to a Gentleman dissenting from the Church of England." For a person to con-

sider the system of religion which he professes as superior to every other, is exceedingly natural; and when claims of pre-eminence are made by the advocates of a different denomination, he may be expected to appear in its defence. An establishment wherein every thing has long been fixed, and rendered unalterable by law, is, in general, unfavourable to such pretensions, as it cannot throw off what is acknowledged to be objectionable and wrong. But, on the other hand, the weight of public opinion in its favour, the superiority to any sectary which its clergy conceive they possess, and the prospect of ecclesiastical exaltation to opulence and fame, give courage even to timidity, and supply zeal to the man who ventures to stand forth in defence of a national church.

Highly displeased he was with Dr. Watts, who took it for granted that the dissenters enjoyed greater advantages for knowledge and personal religion than the members of the establishment, and therefore ought to be more eminent for wisdom and goodness. Feeling too for the honour of his communion, he indignantly denies the doctor's position; he asserts the equality at least, if not the pre-eminence, of the members of his church, as to their life and conversation, when compared with the dissenters; and insists on the superiority of their advantages for improvement in the Christian temper. Such is the substance of his first letter: in the second and third he descends to the common topics, and placing his shield before the body of the church, empties his whole quiver against the friends of the dissent. The temper with which he assails his opponent is as decent as can be reasonably expected from a controversialist, whose mind is wrought up, in the course of its exertions, to a heat

and edge with which the calm and unprovoked reader does not always sympathize.

Attacks so numerous and varied, it may easily be supposed, would not be permitted to pass without notice. They brought into the field Michaiah Towgood, afterwards one of the ministers of the united congregations at Exeter, who attained considerable fame by the manner in which he conducted the controversy. He published, in 1745, "The Dissenting Gentleman's Letters to Mr. White." They are three in number, with an appendix. The dissenters had certainly reason to boast of an advocate who did not betray their cause, and who displayed superior skill in their defence. He was perfectly master of the subject: his style was well adapted to controversy: he reasoned with force, brevity, and point; was acute in discovering the weak parts of the arguments of his opponent, and had a singularly happy faculty in returning them upon himself. To give that pungency to reasoning which would render it interesting to his readers, he had wit at command; while he is luminous, he compresses; and by brevity, avoids the tediousness of arguments expanded and protracted to excess. It will be difficult to find a volume of controversy which, in so small a space, combines so much light of information with so much strength of reasoning. The greatest defect of the book is its form. As he followed Mr. White through his three letters, the same subject, instead of being discussed at once, recurs in different parts. To introduce his peculiar theological sentiments, which, as they were widely different from the puritan creed, and condemned by the two thousand nonconformist ministers, whose advocate he was, must be considered

as a greater blemish. The general merit of the work is evident from the avidity with which it has been read. Six editions were published during the author's life, and three have appeared since. During the whole continuance of the controversy there is no one work which has had so long continued, and so extensive a demand.

Here the main current of the controversy between the church and dissenters may be said to stop. After this, though particular parts have been investigated, or brief abstracts of the matters in debate have been, from time to time, presented to the public, which will be noticed under the third period of the history, no considerable work has since appeared on either side.

In taking a general survey of the whole, it will be apparent to every person who patiently examines the subject, that before an agreement between the parties can take place there are formidable difficulties to surmount; and he will perceive the different principles on which they ground their system, and the different modes of reasoning which they adduce for its support. What the one party considers as axioms carrying more than demonstration with them, the other looks upon as doubtful *postulata*, the proof of which remains to be produced.

The advocates for the church step boldly forward to the contest, taking it for granted that the establishment of religion in a country by the civil powers is almost a necessary thing. Without it devotion would die or decline; and the mass of the people have neither the knowledge nor appearance of religion: and that to it Christianity is indebted for her stability and support among the nations of the earth,

and almost for the continuance of her very existence.

The formation of such an establishment they consider as the province of the rulers of a country, with or without the co-operation of the clergy. As they have the right to form a civil constitution, it is likewise a legitimate exercise of their authority to enact an ecclesiastical economy.

They unanimously maintain that the Christian church, in the fourth century, presents a fair specimen of what it was when first framed by the hands of the apostles of Christ. If any additions or changes had taken place they were unimportant; and the articles of faith, as well as the rites and ceremonies then in use, have a sufficient warrant from the Word of God.

Another of their maxims is, that if there be nothing in the system which can be proved to be forbidden in the sacred Scriptures, it is not improper to retain it, and no one has a right to complain of hardships on that account. Things not mentioned or enjoined in the Oracles of God may, they think, be established by the authority of rulers, civil and ecclesiastical.

They then proceed to lay it down as an acknowledged principle, that it is the duty of all the people in a country to submit to this establishment in all things. The clergymen appointed by the state are their lawful teachers; and as children ought to obey their parents, and subjects their rulers, so ought the inhabitants of a parish to submit to the instruction and government of these spiritual guides. To refuse submission to them, and to unite with ministers of another communion, involves the unhappy persons in the guilt of schism, which the church, in all ages,

has reprobated as a very heinous crime, and extremely dangerous to the souls of men.

Union among Christians they represent as a very important thing, and they quote some passages out of the Scriptures, and many out of the fathers, in which this union is highly extolled: wonderful virtues are ascribed to it, and dreadful miseries are represented as falling upon those who break its bonds and enter into another communion. But by union they always mean that every one must think as they think, and adopt their creed, their rubric, their mode of worship and government, and in all things conform to their ecclesiastical constitution. This is the pattern according to which union is to subsist, and from which it derives all its virtues.

In consequence of these principles it is but too apparent that many of them come to the controversy with ideas of their superiority, and consider their system as a privileged system. Because it is established, they conceive that, by this means, they have acquired a pre-eminence, and are too apt to look upon their opponents as weak, narrow-minded, and bigotted people, whom it is not improper to treat with contempt, or else to consider, in some degree, in the light of culprits, who, by forsaking the national religion, have been guilty of a crime. Such are the principles and spirit of those who have appeared on the side of the established church, as they are exhibited in their polemical works.

The dissenters come next into the field, and bring with them their code of principles, which they consider as self evident, or capable of demonstration.

The sacred Scripture, they say, contains the whole

of religion; and it alone has an authoritative power to bind in matters of faith and practice.

Nothing ought to be inserted in any creed, or system of religion, which is not evidently to be found in this book. The traditions of Rome they reject as old wives fables; and to the inventions and additions of any other church they pay no greater regard.

Things not enjoined in the sacred Scriptures, they insist, should be left indifferent; so that Christians may practise or abstain from them, as conscience dictates, or expediency directs. They consider no church as possessing any authority in this respect; and that both as to doctrines and rites they exceed their powers, when they make any thing a necessary article of faith or communion, where the Word of God has given no decision, but left men entirely at their liberty.

The civil magistraté, they say, has no authority in the church of Christ. The Jewish economy was a theocracy: it comprehended a political as well as a religious system, which were essentially interwoven. The performance of many of the duties, and the execution of the laws, religious as well as civil, were, by the explicit appointment of Jehovah the supreme legislator, placed under his inspection, and in confirming them he was performing the office which the code of Moses assigned him as his duty. But the Christian religion is entirely spiritual, and not blended with the smallest mixture of political institutions. Its offices are to be filled, and its duties are to be performed by disciples of Christ, in an individual capacity. It interferes not with the regulations of human government: "Christ's kingdom is not of this world." It is fitted to subsist under any govern-

ment, Pagan or Mahometan, without interfering with their operations. And in the exhibition of Christianity through the whole of the New Testament, not a single hint is ever given, that the civil rulers of any country are, in that capacity, at all to interfere with the Church of Christ, so as to frame regulations for his disciples, and exert an authoritative influence in its affairs. Against all civil interference dissenters solemnly protest.

Nothing more, they assert, should be required, in order to Christian communion, than Christ has required; and all terms of human invention, in addition to Christ's, authoritatively enforced on the consciences of men by civil or ecclesiastical rulers, are exceedingly sinful. When any church makes such terms, it is not acting according to the holy Oracles, but assuming a power unauthorised by the Gospel of Christ. And that if things not enjoined in the Scriptures were left indifferent, Christians, amidst their various apprehensions about them, may enjoy full communion with each other, and live together in harmony and peace.

They maintain that every man has a right to judge for himself in matters of religion; that no one has a right to dictate to him, or compel him to belong to a church which he does not conceive to be according to the model in the New Testament; and as it is his duty, so he is fully authorised to belong to that society of Christians which he most approves.

They also assert, that all are on a level with respect to the right of enjoying liberty of conscience and of worship; and that each is under equal obligations to yield to another, for the sake of peace, and in order

to the maintaining of brotherly affection and Christian communion.

The reader is now in possession of the leading sentiments of the dissenters, which they lay down as the foundation of all their reasoning in this controversy.

In arguing from these different principles, it is evident that the two parties will come to very different conclusions; while each will think that he has arrived at them in a legitimate way. In order to settle the dispute, it becomes necessary to ascertain whose principles are just and pure. If human authority is to be admitted in aid of the holy Scriptures, and the form of the Christian church in the fourth century considered as a faithful representation of its state in the first century, then the writers on the side of the establishment are able to defend her cause. But if the sacred Scriptures are the only rule of the doctrine and government of a Christian society, and nothing ought to be authoritatively enjoined, except that which can by fair reasoning be thence deduced, then the dissenters build upon an impregnable rock, and none of their adversaries will be able to prevail against them.

CHAPTER IV.

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES IN WHICH THE DIS-
SENTERS WERE ENGAGED.

SECTION I.

OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY.

FROM the fall of man, the world has been the theatre of contention, and the permanence of strife to the present day, not only among nations but between families and individuals, proclaims the lamentable depravity of human nature. If the church betrays the same spirit, we are not to wonder; for some who make a profession of religion, are still under the dominion of evil dispositions, and have nothing of Christianity but the name and the external garb; while others, the sincere disciples of Christ, exhibit the too evident remains of imperfection.

There are, perhaps, but two states of the church from which controversy will be entirely excluded: the one is, that of extreme ignorance, in which men have neither talents nor knowledge to dispute: the other is that of the redeemed in heaven, in which they shall all be perfect in knowledge. Whether it will be so in the millenium, admits of no decision, till the children of that favoured age arrive in heaven, and inform their elder brethren of the spirits and pursuits of those whom they left behind on earth. Till that time

controversy will continue : we may, however, assert, that in proportion to the prevalence of truth and piety, the number will decrease. But it may be laid down as a general rule, sanctioned by the Scriptures, and confirmed by reason, that wherever an important doctrine of the Gospel is perverted or denied, it is not only lawful, but a duty of no mean rank to stand up in its defence. If ever the disciples of Christ were called upon to perform this duty, it was in this period, when some among the dissenters, both ministers and laymen, sought to overthrow the doctrine of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That the great adversary of God and man should attempt to shake this massy pillar of the Christian faith, it is natural to expect : it has been his employment from the beginning, and there is supposed to be a reference to it in the inspired writings. In the beginning of the fourth century, Arius, a presbyter of the church of Alexandria, gave his name to the heresy which places Christ in the rank of creatures. It found, as may be imagined, many advocates and abettors, for its influence on sentiments and conduct was agreeable to the propensities of the human heart. But ceasing to be new, and unsupported by the civil power, in a series of years it died, and was buried in oblivion : and for centuries scarcely an arian was to be found.

After the reformation was established, arianism again revived, and advocates appeared for it in different countries, but with inconsiderable success. Almost every where discouraged, and in some places very harshly treated, the greater part of them retired into Poland, where, blended with the socinians, they continued to exist for a considerable time. In Eng-

land there were a few, but the inflicting of the unjust punishment of death upon an arian in the reign of the first James, while it pollutes the page of our history, put them under close restraint, as to the publication of their opinions. During the commonwealth, arianism had a most strenuous advocate in Mr. Finmin, whose treatment by the divines of that day reflects no honour on their ideas of religious liberty. Mr. Emlyn, of Dublin, who, towards the close of the seventeenth century, avowed himself a disciple of Arius, was a solitary instance among the dissenting ministers of that age: and the horror which it excited, both among his colleagues and his congregation, drew after it consequences almost fatal to himself; but it does not appear that he was followed by any of his brethren.

In the end of the seventeenth, and the beginning of the eighteenth century, there was a dispute of considerable extent concerning the true explication of the doctrine of the Trinity, but chiefly by divines of the church of England. Mr. Howe wrote several pieces on the subject. They certainly might have been better employed; for to expound what, in the ecclesiastical sense of the term, is a mystery, or, in other words, to explain what is acknowledged to be inexplicable, is a work which will not produce much fruit. To specify with precision the personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to express in what way the one is three, and the three are one, is a task above the reach of human powers. But to maintain and believe the doctrine of Scripture, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and that these three are one, is a very different thing; and its importance will be seen in the review of the

arian and socinian controversies, and the mournful effects on those who espoused these unhallowed systems. .

Arianism had for its first champion, William Whiston, professor of mathematics in the university of Cambridge. Enraptured with the writings of the fathers, he felt an enthusiastic veneration for their sentiments ; and what seems almost incredible where the judgment is not impaired by fatuity or insanity, he regarded " the Apostolical Constitutions," a work which, by the most judicious critics, is accounted of no earlier date than the fourth century, to be of equal authority with the books of the New Testament. Nothing more is necessary to characterize the man. From these sources he drew his system, which he distinguished by the title of Eusebianism, which represents the Son, or *Logos*, as formed before all ages by the will and power of the Father ; and the Holy Ghost as created by the Father, by the ministration of the Son. This bungling theory he had began to adopt, and to propagate for several years, when, in 1710, the university expelled him from his professorship for heresy ; and in the following year, he published his " Primitive Christianity," and launched all his opinions into the world.

The system found a more able advocate in Dr. Samuel Clarke, rector of St. James's, Westminster, who, in 1712, published his book on the Trinity, and ushered in arianism to the view of the religious public, in the most orthodox garb which he could possibly make up. The Father, he says, is the supreme God. The Son is inferior, but he would not say, he was created. In the second edition, however, he goes a step farther, and says, " the Son was produced by the

power and will of the Father, and the Holy Ghost is inferior to the Son¹.

These works, which were the only large systems of arianism written by English divines in modern times, and in the English tongue, attracted considerable attention, and many greedily swallowed the poisonous draught. In the established church, the effects were not very powerful, because they did not influence the body of the people. Many of the clergy, and some speculatists among the laity became converts to the system. But the mass did not enter into the subject, nor concern themselves about it; they perceived no difference in the preaching of their parish priests, nor were they sensible of the change of doctrine.

But among the dissenters the case was widely different. The people concerned themselves about religion as much as their teachers; and many of them understood as well the doctrines of the Gospel. When the heresy found an entrance here, it created a convulsion in the body; it produced, in the adherents to the ancient faith, paroxysms of horror and anguish, and roused their most vigorous energies to expel the poison. An entrance however it did find, and in a few years after the publication of Clarke and Whiston's books, made its appearance in the city of Exeter, under the patronage of two presbyterian ministers, Joseph Hallet and James Pierce.

Hallet, the son of an ejected minister, had been pastor there from 1689. Mr. Pierce, a man of very eminent abilities, and of the highest influence among

¹ The doctor was called before the convocation to answer for his heresy; but he clung to his preferments, gave an equivocal explanation to his sentiments, and promised for the future to be silent on the subject.

the dissenters in that city, was first minister at Cambridge, where he became acquainted with Whiston. He afterwards removed to Newbury, from whence he was called to Exeter in 1713, as one of the ministers of the three united congregations. He was beyond measure valued and beloved, his ministrations were in the highest degree acceptable ; and no man, in the west of England, was superior to him in the estimation of the dissenting body.

In the year 1717, arianism began to rise above ground. A few individuals, who were said to be in the confidence of these ministers, were heard to speak contemptuously of the orthodox doctrine, charged the common notions of the Trinity with blasphemy, and argued boldly for the arian system. Some they perverted to their opinions, and others were filled with horror at their impiety. The city of Exeter was in a blaze ; the favourers of the new system and the converts were active and bold ; and by the friends of the orthodox doctrine, the most powerful alarm was felt for the purity of divine truth.

In the mean time, with the exception of Mr. Lavington, who was of a different spirit from his brethren, the ministers were still as death and cold as the grave. Not a word on the subject would they utter from the pulpit : nothing could be extorted from them in private conversation ; and their silence was a source of the bitterest grief to their people, as they conceived it to be the duty of their pastors in this time of trial to stand up in defence of the truth, and raise their voice against the champions of error. At length the managers of the congregations, consisting of thirteen persons, who were among the most respectable for character and station, and conducted all the business,

felt it to be their duty to intreat their ministers to preach on the divinity of Christ, for the satisfaction of the friends of truth. This was in the summer of 1717. Mr. Pierce complied, but with an ill grace; and his discourse, both as to sentiments and delivery, tended to strengthen their suspicions of his unsoundness in the faith.

The aspect of affairs continued to grow more deplorable. The enemies of truth increased in boldness and in zeal, and their attempts were crowned with success. Those who were sound in the faith became more impatient and uneasy, and the ministers in some cases less reserved. A respectable preacher, who lived in Exeter, having, in the close of a sermon, adduced some arguments in defence of the divinity of Christ, Mr. Pierce, on a complaint of some of his adherents, proposed to his brethren that he should not be allowed again to enter their pulpits.

Still, however, the friends of the Gospel continued to wait in hopes of better days. But finding their hopes frustrated, and perceiving that arianism was gaining ground, it was resolved that another attempt should be made to prevail with the ministers to appear openly on their side. In the beginning of 1718, the committee appointed some of their own number to represent to their ministers the state of the city, and request them to preach in defence of the "eternal Deity of Jesus Christ." Their reception was unfavourable. Mr. Pierce especially felt himself insulted by the request, was unable to conceal his resentment; and expressions, which dropped from him in conversation, tended to strengthen the suspicions of his heresy.

Nor was the controversy confined to Exeter: it

spread over the neighbouring country, and excited the most lively alarm in the minds of all the zealous ministers around. When, therefore, the assembly of Devon and Cornwall met in September, 1718, the distracted state of some of the churches, the apprehended defection of some of the ministers and people, and the distress of the most pious on account of the prevalence of the new notions, influenced the assembly to take the subject into consideration. As suspicions had been entertained of some of the body, it was proposed and adopted, that each of the ministers should make a confession of his faith of the doctrine of the Trinity, either in the words of the first article of the church of England, or in the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Assembly's Catechism, or in appropriate words of his own selection. Some opposition was made, but it was over-ruled; and the ministers, beginning with the most advanced in years, uttered a declaration of their belief. Mr. Hallet's was wholly in words of Scripture. The confession of Mr. Pierce was in words of his own, but it was such as an arian might make. Some refused to declare their sentiments. But it was remarked, that the most eminent for theological knowledge, wisdom, piety, zeal, and usefulness delivered a good confession before many witnesses. Some of the young and less esteemed, in addition to the Exeter ministers, excited suspicion. No remarks, however, were made in the assembly on any thing which was said.

Soon after this meeting, various pamphlets in favour of arianism, some of them printed in Exeter, and others sent down from London, were industriously *circulated* among the people. They were filled with

loud outcries against blasphemy, imposition, persecution, inquisition, and tests^k. The students for the ministry, under the tuition of Mr. Hallet, were discovering an attachment to the growing error. A baptist minister, to whose house they used constantly to resort, was dismissed by his church for imbibing the arian heresy. In addition to these sorrows, the members of the establishment were holding up the dissenters as the just objects of contempt and horror. They could not appear in the public markets without being told, "you denied your church first, and now you are denying your Saviour." An archdeacon at Barnstaple, in his discourse to the clergy, accused a minister of Exeter, and most of his congregation of being contaminated with arianism. The clergy of the city from their pulpits warned their hearers against the dissenters, because "they denied the Lord that bought them, and made the press to groan with their blasphemies." So general was the effect on the public mind, that the judge at the Exeter assizes, in his charge to the grand jury, spent the greater part of the time in inveighing against the abettors of the arian heresy.

The impression made on the minds of the most pious and peaceable disciples of Christ, by these painful occurrences, caused still deeper distress. None appear to have felt more deeply than the members of the committee, who, perceiving that the contagion of heresy spread itself more widely, conceived it their duty to come closer to the point, and to inquire of their ministers what were their sentiments as to the doctrine of the Trinity, and for the sake of

^k "The Innocent vindicated." "Letter to the Dissenters."
"Answer to Mr. Trosse's Catechism."

the congregations to give them satisfaction. Mr. Hallett Lavington alone complied. The others refused, and by their conversation strengthened the suspicions of their unsoundness in the faith. About the same time Mr. Pierce gave orders to the clerk, that he should not sing the doxologies which had been always in use among them: these ascribed glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one God, and were given out at the end of the psalm. Mr. Hallett, to shew his zeal in the same cause, having been accustomed to ascribe *all* glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now omitted the word *all*; and having once used it inadvertently, he immediately recalled it in the face of the whole congregation.

The distress of the friends of the orthodox doctrine now became extreme, and their patience was almost exhausted. The committee, however, determined to use every method for the restoration of peace, as well as for the preservation of truth. They had before applied to the most eminent ministers in the neighbourhood, who, by conversation with Mr. Pierce and his brethren, and by resorting for counsel to some of the ablest divines in London, had done all in their power to put an end to their differences at Exeter; but their efforts proved vain. The committee, resolving to leave no means untried, made application themselves to these London ministers and requested their interference and advice. It cannot be said that they were forward in their interference. They again strongly urged forbearance and conciliation, and recommended an application to the ministers in the neighbourhood of Exeter, as far

¹ Dr. Calamy, Jeremiah Smith, W. Tong, Benjamin Robinson and Thomas Reynolds.

better qualified to serve them in their present difficulties by counsel and influence. If this method did not succeed, they professed themselves willing afterwards to use every method in their power for healing the wounds of the afflicted congregations.

That nothing might be wanting on their part, the committee called in seven of the most respectable ministers in Devonshire to assist them in their perplexities. These good men felt deeply for the cause of religion, and entered on the service with a most Christian spirit, and an earnest desire to promote the cause of truth and peace, if they could possibly be attained together. They conversed with the ministers of Exeter in the most affectionate spirit, though they found a cold reception and little encouragement in their mediation: they investigated the subject fully with the committee; and after due deliberation, they agreed to the three following resolutions.

“1. That there are some errors in doctrine, which are a sufficient ground for the people to withdraw from their ministers holding such errors.

“2. That the denying the true and proper divinity of the Son of God, *viz.* that he is one God with the Father, is an error of that nature, contrary to the holy Scriptures and common faith of the reformed churches.

“3. That when so dangerous an error is industriously propagated, to the overthrowing of the faith of many, we think it the indispensable duty of ministers, who are set for the defence of the Gospel, earnestly to withstand it, and to give reasonable satisfaction to their people of their soundness in the faith. And we likewise recommend to the people as their duty, to hold fast the truth in love, avoiding anger, clamour,

and evil speaking, and to behave themselves with all sincerity and meekness as becometh Christians."

Fearful of acting with rashness or haste, they submitted the resolutions to their brethren around, and then to those ministers in London who had been consulted on the subject; and after receiving their approbation, a month still elapsed before they were delivered in to the committee, which was then left to act for itself, with only this advice, "to proceed with wisdom and deliberation." On the following day they applied to the four ministers of the city, for satisfaction as to their sentiments on the doctrine of Christ's divinity. Mr. Lavington's orthodoxy they knew. Mr. Withers, after some hesitation, affixed his signature to the first article of the church of England. Mr. Hallet and Mr. Pierce refused to give satisfaction in any way. This brought the business to a conclusion, for, in the following week, which was about the middle of March, the committee, who held the meeting-houses as proprietors and trustees, refused Mr. Hallett and Mr. Pierce permission to preach any longer in their places of worship, and broke off all connection with them as their ministers.

During the whole of the dispute Mr. Pierce acted as the principal, and displayed remarkable firmness and energy. He conceived that he had a right to enjoy his own private opinions; and as he never brought the controversy into the pulpit, that the people did him a great injury in not suffering him to hold them without molestation. Every application made to him to preach on the divinity of Christ, he considered as an insult; and his resentment was kindled to a flame. His dismissal, which was unexpected, he looked upon as the highest injustice, and

loudly complained to the world of unmerited sufferings and cruel persecution. The committee, on the other hand, conceiving that their ministers, by introducing dangerous doctrines in a clandestine way, had forfeited all claims to their esteem ; and resting their defence on this fact, they thought themselves vindicated from every charge, and threw the whole blame on their ministers, who had apostatised from the true faith of the Gospel.

While the arian controversy was agitated with uncommon eagerness in the west of England, the metropolis felt its unhappy influence. The dissenters there too had their peace disturbed by the proceedings which took place in consequence of the application that had been made to some of their ministers for advice. Their extreme caution, and the cool moderation of their conduct, have been already noticed ; and had they stopped there, they would, in the opinion of many, have secured both their honour and their peace. But a desire to restore harmony between the pastors of Exeter and their congregations, led them to attempt additional measures ; and they might be prompted too by the entreaties of the most zealous Christians there, who urged them in earnest and affecting terms to assist them in their distress.

Some gentlemen in London, who felt deeply for the sorrows of their brethren, drew up a paper of advices, which they conceived to be suited to the occasion, and delivered it to the general committee of the three denominations. After it had undergone repeated discussion before that body, thinking themselves unauthorised to send it to Exeter in their own name, as it was extremely important, and also

concerned the general welfare, they called together all the dissenting ministers in London and its vicinity, that if it was approved by them, it might be conveyed to the west, strengthened with all the weight of their united recommendation.

On the nineteenth of February the general body met, and in a numerous assembly it was agreed to consider the paper with minute attention. Some progress was made, and a second meeting fixed for the twenty-fourth. In the course of their proceedings on that day, it was proposed by one of the members, that the advices should be accompanied with a declaration of their own faith in the doctrine of the Trinity. Such a step, he said, would give them greater weight with the friends of truth, and serve to discountenance the votaries of error. An eager debate was the consequence of this motion, and it was carried by a majority of fifty-seven to fifty-three, that a declaration concerning the Trinity should not be inserted in the paper of advices^m.

While the subject was thus in agitation, the people felt themselves as deeply concerned in the question; and the refusal of their ministers to make a declaration of their faith as to the doctrine in dispute, awakened, in the minds of many private Christians, a fear that they either did not believe the doctrine of the Trinity, or were not so zealous for it as they ought to be. These fears were loudly expressed, and a considerable number of the ministers now perceived an agitation on the hearts of the most pious of their flock, which it was of the utmost importance to

^m By those who espouse the side of the nonsubscribers, this decision is celebrated as the triumph of liberty over oppression, of liberality over bigotry, of divine authority over human usurpation, of the sacred Scriptures over creeds and articles and confessions of faith.

allay. With this view, when the assembly met the third time, on the third of March, a motion was made, that without relation to the advices, and as a step entirely distinct, the ministers should make an explicit declaration of their belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, and especially of the divinity of Christ, which was the subject agitated in the west. This measure, it was urged, became necessary, in order to vindicate themselves from the misrepresentations which were abroad against their character, to give satisfaction to the members of their respective congregations, and to exhibit their sentiments to the dissenters in general throughout the country.

The moderator, conceiving the motion to be an interruption of the business which was then discussing, refused to put it to the vote. Highly displeased with his conduct, sixty of the ministers immediately withdrew from the assembly, and meeting together in another place, they unanimously resolved to adopt the words of the first article of the church of England, and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Assembly's Catechism, as a form of sound words in which the Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity is properly expressed. Acting now as a separate body, they drew up a new series of advices to the dissenters of Exeter, and accompanied them with the information of their stedfast adherence to the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of their subscription to two summaries of acknowledged orthodoxy in the churches. But these testimonies of their zeal did not arrive at Exeter till a month after Mr. Pierce and Mr. Hallet were excluded from their places of worship, and the connection between them and the congregations was dissolved.

In the mean time, those ministers, who remained at Salter's-hall, more numerous according to some than their subscribing brethren, while others say that they were inferior in number, having the advantage of the moderator on their side, proceeded with the business before them, and, in an adjourned meeting on the tenth of March, put the finishing hand to their advices, which, on the seventeenth, they sent off to Exeter, accompanied with a letter, in which, while they professed their own belief of the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, they earnestly recommended to the people the exercise of moderation, peace, and love. But their counsels also arrived too late: the ministers had been already dismissed.

The dissenting ministers in the west, roused by the proceedings in London to a more thorough investigation of the subject, thought that something still remained to be done in order to testify their adherence to the orthodox faith. When, therefore, the Exeter assembly was convened at its half yearly meeting, in May, 1719, the doctrine of the Trinity naturally became the topic of conversation. It was resolved to publish their sentiments of it more explicitly to the world; and they thought that they could not do this in a more unexceptionable manner, than by affixing their names to the first article of the church of England. It was accordingly subscribed by the ministers of Devon and Cornwall to the number of fifty-six. Nineteen professing to act on the principles of the nonsubscribers in London, refused to concur: Joseph Hallet and James Pierce stand at the head of the list. The fifty-six ministers, who subscribed the article on the Trinity, accompanied that act with a letter of advice to their respective congregations—"to adhere sted-

fastly to the received doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity."

Having espoused the cause of the subscribing ministers in London, they also address a letter to them, and express their sentiments in the following words. "We, the united ministers of Devon and Cornwall, are very sensible of the great service you have done to the common cause of Christianity in so open and vigorous an opposition to the dangerous error relating to the doctrine of the holy Trinity, which of late has been so industriously propagated, and take this opportunity, now that we are assembled together, to express our joy in the harmony that is between us, and our thanks for your seasonably interposing in a matter of so great importance." That, if possible, the introduction of the arian heresy might be prevented, they entered into a resolution that no person should be admitted to preach as a candidate, nor ordained by them, nor recommended to any congregation, unless he gave them satisfaction as to his soundness in the faith, by subscribing the first article of the church of England, and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions in the Assembly's Catechism, or assenting to the collective sense of the preceding assembly: viz. "That there is but one living and true God, and that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost are that one God," or in words of his own choosing, which sufficiently express the same sense.

Here the controversy terminated as to the interference of public bodies of men, but it continued to be agitated extensively by individuals; and, in a course of years, arianism obtained a multitude of votaries in the presbyterian denomination, and that of

^a Account of the Exeter Assembly, May, 1719. p. 23, 24.

the general baptists, both among their ministers and persons in private stations^o.

The vast importance of this controversy and its extensive influence on the state of the dissenters, while they furnish reasons sufficiently strong for entering so minutely into the various transactions which have been mentioned, they also warrant, and indeed call for additional illustration by some reflections on the sentiments and conduct of the persons who were engaged in this mournful dispute.

^o A detailed account of the foregoing particulars will be found in the following publications. "The Case of the Ministers ejected at Exeter, by James Pierce." "An Account of the Reasons why many Citizens of Exeter have withdrawn from the Ministry of Mr. Pierce, being an Answer to his State of the Case." "A Defence of the State of the Case, by James Pierce." "A Defence of the Account, in answer to James Pierce." "A Justification of the Case, by James Pierce." "A true Account of what was done in the Assembly at Exeter, May fifth and sixth, 1719, published by order of the assembly." "Remarks on the Account, &c. by James Pierce." "A particular Account of the Proceedings of the Assembly at Exeter, by George Jacomb." "A Defence of the Proceedings, &c. by John Enty." "An Answer to Mr. Enty's Defence, by James Pierce." "A plain and faithful Narrative of the Differences among the Dissenters at Exeter, &c." "An authentic Account of some Things done, &c. by the dissenting Ministers at Salter's-hall." "A Vindication of the subscribing Ministers, in an answer to the authentic Account, &c." "A Reply to the subscribing Ministers' Reasons, in two parts." "A true Relation of some Proceedings at Salter's-hall." "Animadversions on a true Relation, by James Pierce." "An Account of the late Proceedings at Salter's-hall, in a letter to Dr. Gale." "The Unreasonableness of the Charge of Imposition against several dissenting Ministers, by Thomas Ridgley." "A Letter to a subscribing Minister in defence of the Animadversions on a true Relation, by James Pierce." "The noble Stand, in three parts, by Daniel Wilcox." "The Western Inquisition, by James Pierce;" and "an Answer to Mr. Pierce's *Western Inquisition*."

Few men have had praises more liberally poured down upon them than Mr. Pierce. He has been often represented as a martyr in the cause of religious liberty and free inquiry : and the most opprobrious names have been heaped on his opposers, as the slaves of bigotry, and the firebrands of intolerance and persecution ; but with what justice, the multitude of facts recorded by writers on both sides of the question, which have just been stated, will enable the reader to determine. The abilities of Mr. Pierce, his learning, and the soundness of his judgment on subjects unconnected with this controversy, will be acknowledged by all who are conversant with his works. His letters to Dr. Wells, discover him to be a man of talents. His Vindication of the Dissenters is a first-rate performance. His sermons are weighty and convincing. In his commentary on four of " Paul's Epistles," there is a superior degree of critical acumen, and with the exception of its arianism, a very large portion of valuable matter. He took up the pen to continue the exposition of the celebrated John Locke ; but dying before he had completed the task, he was succeeded by Dr. Benson, who finished the illustration of all the epistles in the New Testament. Of the three, Mr. Pierce's part is the most valuable, for he as much exceeded Mr. Locke in biblical learning, as he did Dr. Benson in talents, and in acuteness of investigation. With sentiments of Mr. Pierce so justly favourable, it is with reluctance and grief, that we view his deportment in the course of this angry controversy.

His acceptance of the pastoral office at Exeter, was radically wrong. Before he left Newbury, he confesses himself to have been a convert to the opinions

of Whiston and Clarke. But the dissenters at Exeter were zealous trinitarians, as he must have known. To come to them in such circumstances, and to conceal his sentiments; and by the use of ambiguous terms to endeavour to make them believe that he held the same opinions with themselves, was a mode of proceeding, which upon the principles of frankness and integrity cannot be justified. This was the source of all the evils which followed; and if Mr. Pierce was made to drink the cup of wormwood and gall, he had himself alone to blame for disingenuously professing to be what he was not.

There are some things of very inferior moment, in which a minister may differ from his congregation, and harmony still prevail. But in a subject so important as the doctrine of the Trinity, it is impossible that this should be the case. Mr. Pierce indeed considered the difference between the common doctrine of the Trinity and Dr. Clarke's scheme to be of little moment; but he knew that he was singular in this idea, that the people of Exeter considered the difference as an insurmountable barrier to Christian communion, and that an arian minister would be shunned by them with horror as the murderer, instead of being embraced as the friend of immortal souls. Yet with the knowledge of this difference, he accepted their invitation to be one of the ministers of Exeter. By those who would decide impartially on the matter, this is ever to be kept in view.

Nor will Mr. Pierce's behaviour, after he was settled in Exeter, more successfully stand the test of examination. There is reason to fear that it was his endeavour in a secret way, to diffuse his own sentiments among his people. His colleague Joseph

Hallet, an inferior though an older man, had begun before to speculate on the subject; but the honour of making him a complete convert, if honour it be thought, was reserved for Mr. Pierce. The students of Mr. Hallet had Whiston's and Clarke's books put into their hands as masterpieces of theological skill; and while they should have been applying their minds to the study of the great doctrines of the Gospel, they were amusing themselves with those pernicious speculations, and poisoning their souls with the arian heresy. A baptist minister, afterwards dismissed by his people for heterodoxy, was an active instrument in the work; and some individuals in private life, who had been made converts to arianism, were indefatigable in bringing over others to their opinions. In the mean time, Mr. Pierce, the main spring of all, was concealed within the cabinet, and discoursed with none but the *illuminati*; and while his adherents were all busy, not a whisper, could the public say, ever escaped his lips. Such a wily scheme is ill entitled to approbation, and savours more of the arts of jesuitism, than the frank uprightness of the Gospel of Christ.

When, at last, an alarm was raised that arianism was rapidly spreading, and the gentlemen of the committee intreated their ministers to preach on the divinity of Christ, if he had acted as an honest man, he would have avowed his sentiments; and if the people would not have borne with them, he would have quietly retired to some other congregation more congenial with his views. He, however, who before was silent concerning the divinity of Christ, as if there had been no such doctrine in the sacred Scripture, now preaches on the subject, and strives to conceal his meaning under ambiguous terms, that the congre-

gation may be impressed with the idea that he is an assertor of the orthodox faith. It is also said, that he delivered the discourse like a man in a violent passion, and with such rapidity, that his hearers could scarcely follow him.

Mr. Pierce's behaviour to the gentlemen of the committee, when they respectfully though earnestly intreated him to stand forth in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, cannot be viewed but with regret. He could scarcely behave to them with civility, and he poured forth the bitterest complaints of what he called their inquisitorial spirit. But to whom should the people in their difficulties apply more properly than to their ministers? Engaged in business from morning to evening, they have little leisure for controversial disquisitions. His time is devoted to such pursuits, that he may distinguish truth from error; and when any of his people inquire for their satisfaction, concerning the doctrine of Scripture on a particular subject, what is more reasonable, than that he should frankly inform them what appears to him to be the truth. It is but acting according to the divine rule; "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Mal. ii. 7. To refuse assistance in such a case, whatever it discovers, does not discover the spirit of a minister of Jesus Christ. He who can perceive in such a request and refusal, a criminal inquisitiveness on the one side, and a noble spirit of liberty and independence on the other, has certainly more than eagle's eyes.

There is another circumstance in Mr. Pierce's conduct as little to his honour. Having voluntarily accepted the office of pastor in a trinitarian congrega-

tion, he has nothing to say in favour of the orthodox doctrine. When he is asked to write in its defence, he is unable to perform the task ; when his people wish to converse on it, he is shy and silent. He confines himself to practical preaching, which, when separated from the doctrines of the Gospel, must be very defective and inefficacious. But no sooner is he dismissed from his orthodox station, and becomes the minister of an arian congregation, than he can openly preach arianism, and he can write in favour of arianism, and in conversation he can argue for arianism. At the same time, when the committee wish him to preach the received doctrines, he is loud in his complaints, and accuses them of oppressing and persecuting him without a cause. After writing numerous pamphlets on the subject in dispute, he summed up the whole in the " Western Inquisition." Truth compels an impartial examiner to say, that Mr. Pierce exhibits a hauteur, and a contempt of his opponents, which does him no honour : he loses his temper, and brings forward accusations which he is unable to support by proof. " The Answer to his Western Inquisition," invalidates many of his charges, and is besides written in a far better temper, and with a more Christian spirit.

Against the gentlemen who formed the committee of the united congregations, accusations of the blackest kind have been generally adduced by the writers on the arian side, and they have been generally credited ; but with what justice may well be questioned. Their zeal for the orthodox doctrine, their fears of the growth of arianism, their strenuous endeavours to prevent it, and their respectful though earnest intreaties that their ministers would defend the divinity

of Christ, are things which must redound to their honour in the eyes of every one who is a friend of the truth. The grief which they felt when they saw reason to suspect that their ministers held erroneous opinions, the pains they took by personal conversation, and by the assistance of neighbouring pastors to remove their objections, their application to the London ministers for advice, and afterwards desiring to be counselled and assisted in their difficulties by seven of the most respectable ministers in Devon, display no mean share of judgment, patience, and prudence, and are far from bringing discredit either on their intellectual or moral character.

The greatest advantage which in the course of these transactions they gave to their numerous adversaries, was by the manner in which they dismissed their ministers; and this has been always urged as a proof of a bad spirit, and an unchristian deportment. That they bore with their ministers so long, may well excite surprise, and can be accounted for only from the extraordinary degree of veneration in which Mr. Pierce was held, and their astonishing attachment to him. But when they had reason to conclude that he, as well as Mr. Hallet, were infected with heresy, it is no wonder that they were anxious to be rid of them with all possible speed. To consult the members of the congregation, and act according to their decision, was the proper method; but when, instead of this, they assumed the whole power to themselves, and dismissed the ministers by their own authority, their conduct was altogether unwarrantable, on the principles of independency; and every individual of that persuasion must be shocked at their proceedings. But the Exeter dissenters were

presbyterians, who manage their concerns not by the members of the church, as the independents do, but by a committee of persons who act as the representatives of the whole society. Such was the method at Exeter; and it is evident, from the testimony of Mr. Pierce, that the people had never been convened for business, during the whole six years that he had exercised his ministry among them. It had been promised that they should be called together once a year, to be acquainted with the state of affairs, but the promise had never been fulfilled; and it does not appear that Mr. Pierce and Mr. Hallet complained of this neglect, till the power of the committee was exerted against them. As a farther apology for themselves the committee plead, that they knew they were acting agreeably to the sentiments of the people, that when they afterwards called them together, and informed them what had been done, their conduct was approved, and that the congregations presented to them their warmest thanks for the vigorous steps which they had taken, as a favour conferred on the body, and a highly commendable expression of zeal for the cause of truth. Had they, instead of assembling the people after the dismissal of their ministers, assembled them before, and acted by their authority, the conduct of the committee would have been wholly unimpeachable by any of the friends of the Gospel.

These reflections can scarcely be more properly closed than by the following narration, from Dr. Calamy's account of his own life, which is to this purpose. "In the summer of 1713, I went down to the west. As soon as I arrived at Exeter, I was attended by a number of leading dissenters to know if Mr. Pierce had accepted the invitation to be their

minister; for he had informed them that they should know his mind by me. Never did I see such eagerness in any people for a minister coming among them. They talked as if they were undone if he did not accept their call; and that no other man would signify any thing if they had not him. They ran to such a height, that I told them I was afraid they were under a sore temptation, and that their carriage would provoke God some way or other to cross their too-raised expectations, either by suffering something to keep Mr. Pierce from them, or blasting his pain among them. This was remembered by them afterwards with great concern, when there were such heats among them in doctrinal matters. I told Mr. Pierce himself of it with no small trouble when I saw him afterwards. They had their desire, and for a good while reckoned themselves exceedingly happy; but at last excluded him from their places of worship. It was a very instructive dispensation, and helped to make me more sensible than before, how dangerous a thing it is to have too raised expectations from the creature."

The proceedings of the London ministers, on the same subject, excited the most eager attention of the dissenters in every part of England. The difference of judgment which took place, as to the manner of giving advice to their brethren at Exeter, broke to pieces long contracted friendships, produced suspicious jealousies of each other's principles, and created a party spirit of considerable strength and duration both among ministers and private Christians.

According to the sentiment which has most generally prevailed, the subscribing ministers were

wholly in the wrong: they are charged with a load of guilt; they are said to deny the sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, to be advocates for human authority in spiritual things, and enemies to religious liberty and free inquiry: but when they are heard in their own defence, they have much to say in vindication of their conduct. The general question of the propriety of drawing up a list of articles of religion, and the form of church government, and demanding subscription from every candidate for the pastoral office as a necessary condition of communion, has been attacked and defended by the ablest pens. While the friends of confessions have insisted on the advantages of uniformity of sentiments in an ecclesiastical community, and the importance of securing to the laity the blessings of sound doctrine, the opponents of that system have demonstrated with success the inefficacy of the means, the too powerful temptations for bad men to prevaricate in the most sacred things, and the evil of excluding men of conscience who cannot say amen to every article of the multifarious creed. But to this subject the subscription of the London ministers was conceived by them to bear no resemblance.

In a peaceful state of the church, men of a thoughtful turn of mind, and little piety, will entertain themselves with speculations on theological subjects. Where the heart is not established by grace, and they have no zeal for the salvation of the souls of men, it is more than probable that their speculations will end in error. This was the case with some of the dissenting ministers, and their people, in different parts of England: the writings of Whiston and Clarke, were industriously circulated and eagerly read, and arian-

ism became the heresy of the day. The religious world heard the report with grief and terror, and every one, in proportion to his zeal and public spirit, took an active part for the preservation of the truth. As some ministers were accused of having imbibed the new opinions, every one was desirous to have satisfactory evidence of the orthodoxy of his own. Such was the temper of mens minds in London as well as in the country. Many of the ministers there perceiving the agitated state of their congregations conceived it of high importance to satisfy them on this head, as a step necessary to the peace of the people's minds, and the success of their own labours and also as well adapted to confirm and animate the friends of the orthodox doctrine in every part of the country, and especially in Exeter, where the controversy raged.

Being convened to give advice to their brethren in the west, they judged this a proper opportunity to bear an explicit testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, and thought it would be more unexceptionably accomplished by subscribing those definitions of the doctrine which were held in veneration, both by the dissenters and the members of the established church.

Against these ministers, who consisted of almost all the independents, some of the presbyterians, and one half of the baptists, loud cries were raised on account of what they had done. By the nonsubscribers it was alledged that they had given up the principles of dissent, exalted human creeds in the place of, or rather in opposition to the Word of God and cast a reproach on their brethren who could not conscientiously co-operate with them. But however warmly these accusations were brought forward and

credited at the time, it is difficult, at this distance, to discern their criminality. In order to a minister's usefulness among his flock they must have a full persuasion of his soundness in the faith, or they will never listen to him with respect and affection: should there be the least surmise that he is a heretic, they will hear him with suspicion and distrust, or they will refuse to hear him at all. For the good of his congregation therefore he will be anxious to remove the shadow of a suspicion: and when this can be done, either by using words of his own, or by adopting the words of others which express his own ideas, what principles of Christianity or dissent he hereby violates it is difficult to perceive. The subscribers acted as individuals; they compelled no other person to act as they did; and if suspicion fell on any for following a different course, they could not be under obligation to abstain from an important duty, because others did not see fit to imitate their example.

The letter and advices sent by the subscribers to Exeter accorded with their subscription. They were frank and full in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity; and having reason to believe that some of the ministers, and some of the people there, had imbibed the arian heresy, they counselled the orthodox, if it was really the case, to separate them from their company, and no longer unite with them in communion; but earnestly recommended that they should proceed with due deliberation, and a Christian temper. To defend the conduct of the subscribers in this is not one of the most arduous tasks which occurs in the course of human labours.

As the subscribers do not deserve the blame which

has been heaped upon them, the nonsubscribers will not be found entitled to all the praise which has been so liberally bestowed. They declared the sacred Scriptures alone to be their creed, and no other would they subscribe ; these contained the words of God, and must be right : human creeds were the words of men, and might be wrong ; and they would not put human in competition with divine authority. The subscribers, they said, were advocates for human authority, if not in opposition, at least in addition to the sacred Scriptures ; and rejecting the true principles of dissent were for binding men, hand and foot, with adamant chains of confessions and creeds." But the question is, whether this was a fair representation of the case.

The subject in dispute was the doctrine of the Trinity. As to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, as the rule and the only rule of faith, both parties were fully agreed ; and that human creeds were an unnecessary addition. The question in debate was, not concerning the words but concerning the meaning of the Scriptures, namely, whether the doctrine of the Trinity was contained in them. The subscribers believed it was, and that the arians perverted the meaning of the passages which related to it ; that they were called upon, from many weighty reasons, to declare their belief of the doctrine ; and though they did it in human words, yet these expressed the meaning of the Word of God. It was conceived by the nonsubscribers, that this was giving too much weight to human authority in religion. But when the question was only concerning the meaning of the Scriptures, it is difficult to say how that meaning could be expressed otherwise than in human words. If application was

made to a counsellor for the meaning of a particular statute, of which it was supposed a person before consulted, had mistaken the sense; we should not admire his judgment, if he were to say, "sir, here is the statute, it contains the words of the legislature: and I will cheerfully subscribe it as the law of the land; but I will not set my name to any words of my own, instead of those of the statute, because they are the words of a private man." His client might justly reply, "the authenticity of the statute I do not call in doubt, but I wish to know what you conceive to be its meaning." Wherein the nonsubscribers differed from the counsellor in this supposed case, it is difficult to say; and what praise is due for their superior regard to the sacred Scriptures, and their opposition to human authority, is left to the reader to determine. He will perceive an immense difference between the civil magistrate interfering in matters of religion, and presenting a creed to be subscribed as the term of admission into the clerical office, and the ministers of Christ on an extraordinary occasion, for the glory of God, and the benefit of the church, standing forth as individuals to check the progress of error, and declaring by their signature, their belief of an important doctrine of Scripture. This distinction, however obvious, does not appear to have been made by those who have so loudly condemned the subscribers, and praised the nonsubscribers in this controversy. (a)

The measures of the nonsubscribers were less decisive than those of their brethren. This body consisted of a majority of the presbyterians, a few independents, and about one half of the baptists who came to the assembly. Some of the baptists were known to be arians, and one or two socinians; some

of the presbyterians were suspected of leaning towards heresy ; but the chief part of them was sound in the faith, and not a few of them were among the most respectable ministers in London. The zeal of some of this body, in opposition to subscription, was, like that of the Exeter ministers, entitled to little praise, for it was to screen their heresy from public view. Others, who were less concerned on their own account, sought to shield these men from the shafts of notoriety ; and both these classes were very active in the work. But the greater part of them acted upon general principles unconnected with the present controversy, though they appear in this instance to have been misapplied. Nor will it be easy to clear them from the charge of inconsistency ; for while they refuse to subscribe an article of faith, they declare in their letter sent to Exeter, and signed by the chairman, Dr. Oldfield, in their name : “ we utterly disown the arian doctrine, and sincerely believe the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and the proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Wherein this strong declaration differed from the subscriptions of the other party, it is not easy to say. Such inconsistencies sometimes appear in the wisest and best of men, and furnish lessons of caution to those who live at a later period. It is extremely difficult for a heterogeneous body to act with unity and decision, and make their operations bear upon one point ; but generally there is a part which suits one, and a part which suits another. The subscribers, on the contrary, were perfectly united in their views, and in consequence there is a consistency in their decisions and their counsels.

In information or in judgment, the nonsubscribers

appear inferior to their brethren. The design of their counsels was to reconcile the ministers and people of Exeter to each other. If they supposed the ministers to be sound in the faith, nothing can be more evident than that they were ignorant of the real state of things; or if they knew them to be tainted with arianism, and yet wished the people to submit to them as their pastors, there is reason to impeach the soundness of their judgment, if not the fervour of their zeal. Till now, arianism had never been able to boast of so many votaries in England, as to render its influence visible to the world, so that some of them were not aware of its effects upon the religion of the heart.

As to the propriety of convening the assembly at Salters-hall to assist in the determination of the dispute at Exeter, there is reason to hesitate. From the days of the apostles, thousands of councils have sat; but taking them in the mass, they have done far more harm than good. A few might be mentioned, where their proceedings were conducted in the spirit of the Gospel; but there have been so many more where pride and passion reigned, and their decisions sanctioned superstition and error, that the others are lost in the crowd. The meeting at Salters-hall does not furnish an exception to this general remark. The debates were carried on with excessive acrimony; the breach which took place was discreditable to their character as a religious body; and two letters and papers of advices differing from each other lost much of the weight, which one would have had. What was equally injurious—it broke up ancient friendships among the ministers who took different sides; and as the people were divided as well as the

ministers, it produced alienation of heart between those who had formerly lived in the most endearing cordiality. It would have been well, if they had listened to the advice of Mr. Bradbury, who proposed, that instead of meeting as a council, they should repeatedly assemble for fasting and prayer; that they should then choose a few of the wisest and best of their number, and send them down to Exeter, to see and hear upon the spot, and give such counsel for the maintenance of truth and harmony, as an accurate and personal knowledge of the whole should dictate¹.

But how comes it to pass that the clergy have in every age exhibited in their councils so much of a spirit of passion, bitterness, and strife, while mercantile men and men of science have generally discovered less heat in their commercial and philosophical deliberations? Is it because teachers of religion who, in their parochial or congregational capacity, regarded themselves, and were regarded by others as oracles unaccustomed to contradiction, when called to sit in an assembly of their fellows, carried along with them the ideas of their own superior knowledge, and expected the same deference to their opinions, as in their own diocesan or parochial circle. This being the prevailing spirit of the body, difference of sentiment creates dissension and debate; debate rouses the passions of those men of consequence; indecorum and violence succeed, and all their unhappy progeny. Allowance must be made also for the operation of another cause. The subjects of discussion in ecclesiastical councils are frequently the most important to the happiness of mankind. If the members conceive the grand doctrines of the Gospel in danger of being perverted or denied, and the oppo-

¹ Bradbury's Letter to Shute,

site error established to the ruin of immortal souls, we are not to wonder, nor hastily to condemn the men who rouse their whole souls to defend the cause of sacred truth, and have every latent energy of the heart exerted in the eagerness of debate. Coldness, in such a case, would be disloyalty to God. But how pleasing is it, when all this ardour is combined, and chastened by meekness of wisdom and the tender feelings of Christian love.

When the violence of the controversy had exhausted its strength, and the original causes of the strife had been removed by dismissing the Exeter ministers from their congregations, the immediate effects of the contest did not appear so injurious, as good men had been led to fear. The ardent spirit of the orthodox for a while stopped the progress of arianism; and with the exception of Pierce and Hallet, and a few who, in different parts of England, adhered to them, and had the hardihood to espouse their opinions, the rest who favoured them, if they did not array themselves with the robes of orthodoxy, at least took care not to appear publicly in the garb of an heretic. A shrewd observer, who drew up an account of the dissenting congregations in London, from 1696 to 1730, though rather high in calvinism himself, does not charge any of the presbyterian ministers with preaching the arian doctrine: in a threefold list of calvinists, baxterians, and arminians, he includes the whole; and that of the calvinists is the largest of the three. The independents and particular baptists were all strenuous for this system. He accuses none of going farther than arminianism, except some of the general baptists, among whom not only arianism, but socinianism was already professed.

But before the conclusion of this period, a more melancholy scene was presented to view. In every part of England, arianism was not only embraced, but openly acknowledged by not a few of the presbyterian ministers. The heresy polluted some of the London pulpits: in Lancashire it was prevalent, and in the counties to the south: it gained ground also in the west whence it first sprang. The generation of ministers, who contended so zealously for the orthodox faith, had finished their labours, and received a dismissal from their Lord into eternal rest. Among those who succeeded them were too many who embraced the arian creed. Those champions, among the laity who, at the beginning of the controversy, stood up so firmly for the truth, had entered into the joy of their Lord. Though their children continued dissenters, too many of them did not possess the same sentiments or spirit; but with a liberal education, and little religion, the arian opinions gratified their literary pride as being remote from the creed of the vulgar, and were less hostile to the depravity of the human heart than that which they renounced. To this unhappy change, the example and conversation of many of the younger presbyterian ministers did but too much contribute. In one or two of the seminaries, the tutors were accused of giving countenance to the heresy among the students. In consequence of these exertions, before the end of the period, arianism spread, far and wide in the presbyterian congregations, both among the ministers and the people. In a few places a socinian preacher appeared. Mr. Seddon, of Manchester, was, perhaps, the first who openly professed that creed: and Mr. Cardale, of Evesham, wrote in its defence⁹.

⁹ *Toulmin's Life of Bourne. Orton's Letters to dissenting Ministers.*

To some, the details on the rise of the arian controversy among the dissenters may appear minute and tedious. But, as it occupied the attention of the body at the time in an extraordinary degree, as it was productive of the most important consequences both to their inward and outward state, and is continuing its baneful effects to the present hour, the history, without a particular account of the whole transaction, would be extremely defective. What the effects were will be specified in their proper place. Suffice it to say, that this unhappy controversy proved the grave of the presbyterian congregations, and of those of the general baptists. Though like the forbidden fruit which did not produce the immediate destruction of the body, but rendered the event certain at a future time, so the effects of arianism, though at first scarcely visible, gradually produced desolation and death. Could Pierce and Hallet rise from the tomb, and see the doleful effects of their new opinions on the congregations in Devonshire, and wherever arianism has been espoused, it would chill their souls with unutterable horror.

SECTION II.

OF THE DEISTICAL CONTROVERSY.

A RELIGION from God can never be agreeable to the depraved heart of man. By such as will not yield to its influence, and mortify their sinful dispositions, it will be the object of hatred and rejection. This was the case when the Gospel was first published to the world. To the mass of the people their pagan ritual appeared more attractive, and secured an easy preference. Another reason of much plausibility sanctioned the decision—it was the religion of their forefathers. By the establishment of Christianity as the national faith, every man was, in process of time, considered as a Christian, and obliged to be so by human laws. Amidst the increasing darkness of ignorance and superstition, all slumbered together on the bed of sloth, and had neither ability nor inclination for speculations on religion.

When the art of printing produced the revival of learning, and opened to the world the treasures of Greece and Rome, so great was the veneration of scholars for the ancient historians, philosophers, and poets, that some of them became heathens, and, along with their writings, embraced the gods whom Greece and Rome adored. Such idolatrous folly strikes us with astonishment; but the dissimilitude between the saints of modern and the gods of ancient Rome was not remarkably great.

The reformation set every mind to work upon reli-

gion, and introduced a freedom both of speech and writing, which had not been indulged before. Then, for the second time, since the days of the heathen Roman empire, Christianity was assailed from another quarter; and the religion of nature was brought into the field as a champion against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The name of *Deists*, which they still retain, was given them about this time: it first occurs in the writings of Viret, one of the reformers of Geneva. But however eagerly they might dispute, they were not forward to publish their sentiments from the press; and it was not till a century afterwards that any printed work in favour of deism appeared in England.

The first of the English deists was lord Herbert of Cherbury, a man respectfully spoken of by the writers of his time: but to be a nobleman, inspired in that age a veneration which the people of the present day have ceased to feel. His first work, "on Truth," was published at Paris in 1624, and his last and most renowned, "on the religion of the Gentiles," at Amsterdam, in 1663, both in the Latin tongue. He was the first that formed deism into a system. His sentiments are, that there is but one God, that he is chiefly to be worshipped, that piety and virtue are the principal part of his worship, that God will pardon sins on repentance, and that there are rewards for the good and punishments for the wicked in a future state, and that these common sentiments were acknowledged by all nations. He inveighs against revelation, but pretends that one was made to himself. Dreading opposition to his work "on the Truth," but anxious to publish it, he fell down on his knees with his manuscript in his hand, and in a

most devout prayer begged of God a sign from heaven, if he approved the book. "I had no sooner," says he, "spoken these words, but a loud, though yet gentle noise came forth from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth), which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted; and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon also I resolved to print my book'." Does it not appear to have been the will of God to pour contempt on deism by the ridiculous credulity of its patriarch?

Thomas Hobbes, of Malmesbury, son of the minister of that place, educated at Oxford, tutor to the sons of the earl of Devonshire, published, in 1650, the "*Leviathan*," containing all his ideas on religious, political, and moral subjects. He professed to be of the church of England, and used to receive the sacrament among her sons. He lived to the age of ninety-one, and when told that his disease was incurable, "then," said he, "I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world at."

Charles Blount, a man of talents and learning, became a deist from his hatred of superstition, and from seeing that men made a trade of religion. In 1693 he published his "*Oracles of Reason*," in which he advances the same principles as lord Herbert of Cherbury. After the death of his wife, becoming enamoured of her sister, who refused to marry him on account of their relationship, he was seized with a frenzy, and put an end to his life.

John Toland always professed himself a Christian, but made it the business of his life to promote the cause of deism. In his "*Christianity not mysterious*," published in 1696, he endeavoured to shew that there

* Leland's View, vol. I. p. 24.

is nothing in the Christian religion above reason. And in his "Amyntor," which he afterwards wrote, he endeavoured to invalidate the canon of the New Testament, by extolling spurious gospels as entitled to equal credit.

Lord Shaftesbury's "Characteristics" entitle him to a high rank in the list of infidels. He frequently speaks with respect of a wise and good providence; and says that men are formed for the practise of virtue and religion. Yet there are many things in his writings designed to crucify Christianity and the sacred Scriptures: and when he particularly opposes the hope of reward, and fear of punishment, as motives to virtue, it is not difficult to perceive that he is opposed to the Gospel of Christ, and that his writings have the strongest tendency to injure the Christian cause.

Another active partisan in the order of deism, is Anthony Collins, who in the beginning of the eighteenth century published "a discourse on Free-thinking," and "Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion." In the former he inveighs against the vices of the clergy, and attempts to prove that the divisions among Christians are a proof of the uncertainty of their principles. In the latter he maintains that Christianity derives no confirmation from the prophecies of the Old Testament. He became a justice of the peace, and when entering on his office received the sacrament as a qualifying test. "This," says Whiston, "I call gross immorality, impious fraud, and lay craft."

Woolston, while he pretended a zeal for Christianity, was one of its most bitter enemies, and treated it with less respect than any of his elder brethren.

He set himself up as an advocate for the allegorical sense of the Scripture; but it seems only to be put on as a cloak while he endeavours to shew the absurdity of the literal meaning. He is at great pains to represent some of Christ's miracles as absurd, false, and incredible. His discourses on the subject were published in 1727, and the two following years. Some have said that he was insane. Had he been sent to Bedlam by his friends, instead of being committed to prison for his infidelity, it would have been more for the honour of the country.

Dr. Tindal was a more plausible advocate for infidelity than Woolston. In his "Christianity as old as the Creation," while he professes a great respect for the Gospel, he strenuously endeavours to shew that revelation is altogether needless, and sets himself particularly against the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. He extols with the highest praises the religion of a deist, and asserts the absolute universal clearness of the law of nature.

Dr. Morgan's "Moral Philosopher," in three volumes, contains his attack on the religion of Jesus Christ. He seems to acknowledge the great utility of revelation, but discards divine authority in matters of religion, and all evidence from miracles and prophecies. He is full of invectives against the law of Moses, and the writings of the prophets; and while he professes to be a Christian on the footing of the New Testament, he speaks of it in the most reproachful manner, and insinuates things dishonourable to the character of Christ.

In 1742, a pamphlet was published, to which the writer gave the title of "Christianity not founded in argument." It was drawn up with great ingenuity

and subtlety, and excited much attention. There is an attempt to prove that its proper foundation is faith only, without evidence or reason. It was afterwards found to be the work of Henry Dodwell, educated for the law, who became a sceptic, to which, perhaps, his father's absurd and peculiar notions might not a little contribute.

"The resurrection of Jesus considered," published in 1744, was the production of an anonymous writer, who does every thing in his power to discredit that infinitely important doctrine.

About the same time Mr. Chubb began to write as a rational Christian, and never explicitly renounced Christianity. But in his posthumous works he insinuates many things to its disadvantage. He speaks against providence and prayer, and rejects the Jewish revelation.

Lord Bolingbroke is to be considered as among the apostles of infidelity, and may perhaps lay claim to the primacy for his eloquence and his zeal. He attempts to discredit both the Old Testament and the New; and in his posthumous works shews equal violence against some of the most important principles of natural religion. At the same time, "the law of nature," he asserts, "is clear and obvious to all mankind; and there is no need of a supernatural revelation.

David Hume, the idol of infidels, wrote against the credibility of miracles universally considered. In his posthumous works, he denies a future state, and treats with the greatest contempt the constitution and government of the world; he rejects and ridicules the doctrine of the being of God and of a Providence.

* Biographia Britannica, vol. V. p. 327.

* On the continent, Voltaire was the most successful preacher of

These were the champions of infidelity, and the most renowned of the English deists, to whom, as to the apostles of their profession, the rest looked up with respect". What regard is due to them, will appear from the following traits of character, which are found to belong to all the brotherhood.

Ignorance of the nature and principles of Christianity is a general characteristic of the deists, and it may be asserted that few among them understood the Gospel sufficiently to be able to form a rational judgment whether it was good or bad, and of its evidences to know whether it was true or false. On any other topic, men, who had written against a science of which they had so little knowledge, would have appeared ridiculous, and have been unable to hold up their face before society. But the nature of the subject, the scope of their writings, and the facilities they gave for the indulgence for every appetite and passion, have procured not indulgence only but favour.

The enemy of human happiness has obtained currency to a maxim on the subject of religion, which is not allowed on any other. If a person has not studied infidelity, and made more converts than any other man. He always professed himself a Christian, and continued to do so upon his death-bed. He never enters into serious argument against the Gospel, which indeed he did not understand, but throws the shafts of ridicule all around him, and treats judaism with the most sovereign contempt.

Rousseau had likewise, during this period, begun his career, and allured his thousands into the infidel camp. For extent of success, and the multitudes whom they alienated from the profession of Christianity, these two men must have a niche in the temple of fame, far above their brethren in the foregoing list.

^u Leland's View of deistical Writers, vol. II. Priestley's Church History, vol. IV. p. 359.

languages or sciences, he does not profess to understand them, and he acknowledges his ignorance. But without having studied religion, he thinks that he understands what religion is, and that he is qualified to speak, to argue, to judge, to decide, and to write upon the subject. How he will write may be easily conceived, and may be seen in the books of the deists, who for the most part understood as little of the principles of the Gospel of Christ, as they did of the language of the Chinese.

The sentiments and temper, which the writings of the deists exhibit, give the attentive reader but too just cause to conclude that Christianity was too good for them, and that they wished for a religion which would be more indulgent to the cravings of their appetites and their passions. Scarcely an individual among them is to be found who is pleased with the character of God as exhibited in the Scriptures. He is too holy and too righteous; they cannot bear the effulgence of his glory. On this account, they strip him of his perfections according to their pleasure, and remove every thing which they dislike; or turning away from him with aversion and dread, they frame an idol to themselves, to which they give the name of God, and which they place upon his throne. An extenuation of the evil of sin is another conspicuous part of deism, and spreads itself over every page. Disobedience to the divine authority loses in the eyes of deists almost all its atrocity, and they behold it with calm indifference. For some vices they stand forth as apologists or advocates; but the whole standard of Christian morals is lowered by their system in an inconceivable degree. Over the future state they generally endeavour to throw a thicker veil. Uncer-

tainty concerning its existence is frequently hinted at; eternal happiness is never exhibited by them as an object of warm desire: and great pains is taken and more fervid eloquence employed to disprove the punishment of the wicked. That pure philanthropy, which burned in the hearts of the prophets and apostles, will in vain be looked for in the volumes of the deists. To promote with zeal the cause of piety and virtue, to improve the moral state of man, and augment his happiness, it may be plainly seen is not their aim. Freedom from the restraints of religion, not a felicity arising from goodness, is the object of their pursuit.

The manner in which they treat the subject and their opponents, produces a still more intimate acquaintance with their character, and teaches in what degree of esteem the men, their system, and their writings are to be held. By persons who treat on religion, which is infinitely the most important of themes, there should be a bold and frank integrity that speaks truth with plainness; and if it gives offence, yet from a conviction of duty submits to any consequences which may ensue. For that integrity in the works of the deists, the reader will look in vain. Most of them profess great respect for Christianity, while its destruction is evidently their object. These Joabs, with apparent cordiality, kiss this Abner, while their design is secretly to smite him under the fifth rib. Instead of coming forward manfully to the attack, and professing a just cause of enmity, they lye in wait like the assassin to stab in the dark. Subtle insinuations are whispered into the ear; the shaft of ridicule is artfully thrown; and then it is pretended that the wound which it inflicts is mortal. Pride, arrogance,

and conceit are but too prominent in every page ; and Christian writers are looked down upon with contempt as their inferiors in talents, in learning, in every thing. The cry of priestcraft is incessant, and in their esteem efficacious as the shout of ancient Israel, and makes the walls of this city of God fall to the ground. An advocate for deism, who is desirous to make men honour God and love one another, practise virtue and hate and shun vice ; and discovers esteem for goodness wherever it is found ; who is grieved that the religion of Jesus which exhibits such noble views of God, which tends so much to the improvement of the human character, and presents to the hopes of the believer a state of eternal happiness in every respect to be supremely desired, is yet destitute of evidence sufficient to convince an impartial inquirer—where shall he be found ?

While Christianity was assaulted by such adversaries, numerous defenders arose for her support. To enumerate those who were cherished in the bosom of the established church, is beyond the design of this work. Suffice it to say, they were a numerous host, and many of them eminently qualified for the service. Those without her pale, it is our province to exhibit.

Among the first who appeared on the side of Revelation, was the celebrated Richard Baxter, who in his " Reasons for the Christian Religion," examines lord Herbert's book " on Truth," and furnishes some ingenious, judicious, and valuable remarks by way of answer. But to a volume of Mr. Halyburton, professor of divinity at St. Andrews, entitled, " Natural Religion insufficient, and revealed necessary to Man's Happiness," and published with the express design to confute the whole of his lordship's system, there

has appeared nothing in the whole of the deistical controversy of superior merit.

During the second period of this history, the deistical controversy was the order of the day. It seems to have engaged the first attention of the literary world, and of that part of the theological body, which enjoys leisure, or is not fixed by its office to particular objects. There is besides a class of men whose taste determines them to the consideration of a favourite subject, and makes them ever ready to enter the field against the advocates for the opposite side. Among the dissenters some of the most eminent ministers engaged with ardour in the defence of the Christian faith. When Toland endeavoured to shake the foundation of the sacred Scriptures, Jeremiah Jones, in his work on the canon of Scripture, made manifest the futility of his objections, and gained to himself deserved honour. Simon Browne displayed great ability in his answer to Tindal and Woolston. Tindal found another antagonist in Dr. James Foster, whose character is well known in the republic of letters. Joseph Hallet brought his superior abilities and ingenuity, and learning into the field of contest against Woolston, against Morgan, and against Chubb. The profound learning of Moses Lowman defended, against the ill-informed but bitter zeal of Morgan, the constitution and government of the Hebrews with complete success. Besides the very elaborate defence of Christianity in his theological lectures, Dr. Doddridge published a judicious answer to Dodwell's "Christianity not founded in argument." Dr. Benson's laborious pen was engaged in the same cause; and in his "reasonableness of the Christian Religion," replied both to Mr. Dodwell, and to a work entitled

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student, for few books of its size contain a more abundant treasure of divine doctrine.

To preach against deism was, during this period, exceedingly fashionable, and common in the established church. "Formerly," says one of its most learned prelates, "the office of the preacher was to explain the Scriptures for the salvation of the people's souls; now we are called to convince them that they have souls to be saved." Many, among the presbyterians and general baptists, followed their example, especially those who embraced the arian creed; for by means of the change, they lost a variety of the themes on which they used to insist, and were left in possession of a narrower field than they occupied before; so that the deistical controversy came seasonably to their relief. But the propriety of this method may be called in question. On particular occasions a sermon on the evidences of Christianity may be both fit and necessary; and brief remarks on the subject in the course of a minister's labours, may be exceedingly suitable and beneficial; but to make it a common theme of discourse in a dissenting congregation, as many of them did, was by no means conducive to the edification of the people. Few deists come to their places of public worship; the subject is too cold for a society of Christians; and if the preacher attend to his grand business, which is to illustrate, confirm, and enforce the principles of the Gospel, he will more effectually establish his congregation in the belief of the Christian religion, than by the ablest discourses on its divine original. Many a congregation was starved under a long series of good discourses on the evidences of Christianity.

For the full discussion of the subject, the press is

certainly the fittest place ; but if it is to come into the pulpit, the dissenting pulpits of that day were the least suitable. The controversy, during this period, was nearly confined to the literary world, and those in the higher walks of life. Among the plain congregations of the dissenters, a deist was hardly to be found ; and the people were but little in danger from this revolting creed. Those ministers among them, who dwelt much on this controversy, discovered a defect of spiritual wisdom, and were guilty of a useless waste of precious time. By their unsuitable choice of subjects, the audience was prevented from attending to those vital principles of the Gospel, which illuminate the understanding, purify the heart, administer consolation to the Christian, and thus preserve him in the knowledge, love, and obedience of the truth ; while they, at the same time, convert the impenitent sinner, and make him a believer of the Gospel in the highest sense. This remark will receive additional confirmation, when it is considered that the strongest evidences of Christianity arise out of its principles, by the clear and forcible exhibition of which the faith of the generality of Christians is produced, increased, and established. So powerful is the influence of this faith, that it will enable them to stand firm against all the assaults of earth and hell, and make them willing and determined to live to the glory of God, and to die in the hope of the Gospel, and if necessary, lay down their life for the Redeemer's sake.

CHAPTER V.

SEMINARIES OF THE DISSENTERS DURING THIS PERIOD.

SECTION I.

ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFERENT SEMINARIES AND TUTOR
AMONG THE DISSENTERS.

TO a subject more important than that of seminaries for the ministry, it is scarcely possible to call the attention of the reader; and every one, who is concerned for the prosperity of the dissenting cause, will feel a lively interest in all that relates to their institutions of theological education. Before we proceed to an account of them during the second period, leave is craved for a few thoughts on the most proper course of instruction for the Christian ministry. How far the practice of their different seminaries accorded with such a plan, will be perceived in the sequel.

On the character of its ministers the prosperity of the church will at all times greatly depend. That they should first be men of talents and piety is devoutly to be desired. Education succeeds to prepare them for this peculiar service. Could a greater blessing be wished for the human race, than that it might be regarded as an universal maxim, "that no one should receive an education for the pastoral office, who had not first been made

a partaker of a divine nature, and known the grace of God in truth."

What is the education which will most effectually form a person of this character for the faithful and edifying discharge of the Christian ministry? As his business is to make men "wise unto salvation," and this wisdom flows from divine Revelation, the first and most important branch of education must be the study of the system of divine truths contained in the Oracles of God. The highest attainment, therefore, in a Christian seminary is, to make the student able to state with accuracy and clearness every doctrine and duty, to adduce the arguments which they furnish for its support, to bring forward the various motives, and to apply every truth with holy skill to the hearts and consciences of men in their various conditions and relations. If the candidate for the ministry, with due attention apply his mind to the study of the principles in the Old and New Testament in their order, he has acquired the first and most important qualification for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has learnt the Christian religion, and is acquainted with all those truths which divine wisdom has in mercy revealed for the salvation of man.

Should the necessities of the world be such, that a student had leisure allotted but for one branch of education, it must be this; no other can be admitted on a competition. Classical learning, the belles lettres, mathematical science, and the whole encyclopædia of human knowledge bear scarcely the proportion of the fly to the sun.

For the acquisition of this knowledge, some have strenuously recommended the study of the Scriptures.

alone, without any human comment. But shall the wisdom of all former ages be rejected as useless? In this science alone, which has been more cultivated than any other, shall the scholar refuse assistance from the learning, the experience, and the labours of his predecessors? Will not the works of an Owen, a Howe, and an Edwards suggest to the theological student a multitude of valuable thoughts on every subject, which would not have been produced by the exertion of his own unfurnished mind? And if knowledge be attained, whether it originally sprang up in his own thoughts, or is suggested by the writings of other men, provided a proper improvement be made of the attainment, the grand desideratum is possessed—a treasure of divine truth, or the substance of a minister's discourses on every topic in religion.

Systematic theology is the name which has been given to this course of study; and it has had to encounter the ridicule of some, and the reprobation of others. But they are requested to consider, that a good system is Christianity itself, arranged methodically under its different heads: and as the matter of the system is infinitely excellent, surely arrangement and order cannot destroy its excellence, nor can the bringing into one point of view, every thing which the Scripture contains on each particular subject, sink its value, or remove it from the highest place in a course of theological study*.

* Turretine and Pictete, professors in the university of Geneva, have been the most celebrated for their systems of divinity; and have collected with great ability an immense mass of valuable information. Students used formerly to read them with the keenest attention; and they will still amply reward a careful perusal. Since that time, Stapferus, a Swiss divine, has composed, within narrower

Whether it is a fault in systems of divinity that they abound in controversy, it is here needless to determine; but to students it is an inconvenience, and if they imbibe the spirit, a serious injury. To them the knowledge of the pure doctrine of Scripture is infinitely more valuable than skill in controversies. From the important maxim, *rectum est norma sui et obliqui*, let the student consider that his grand business in a seminary is to learn the genuine principles of the Gospel with a holy temper in a peaceful way. The particular consideration of controversies may be better referred till additional years have given greater maturity to the judgment, and a larger portion of leisure may be afforded for the purpose.

A second branch of theological study intimately connected with the former, is devoted to the acquisition of biblical knowledge. This title includes the inspiration and divine authority of the different books of the Old and New Testament, the manner of composition, the civil customs of the Hebrews, their religious rites, government, and history, the chro-

limits, a body of theology, perhaps the ablest that was ever published to the world. In the systems of Buddeus and Weismannus, the student will perceive the manner in which divine truths are stated by the ablest divines in the Lutheran church. But as it is difficult for any one man to excel in every point, greater improvement may be derived from distinct treatises on particular subjects. In this view, Charnock "on the Attributes," Jonathan Edwards "on Original Sin," and "on the Freedom of the Will," Claude "on the Office of Christ," Owen "on Justification," and "on the Spirit," M'Laurin "on Divine Grace," and all his treatises, Wither-
spoon "on Regeneration," Evans "on the Christian Temper," Boyse "on the four last Things," will abundantly repay a repeated perusal.

nology and geography of the Scriptures, the rules of interpretation and canons of sacred criticism. In order to prosecute this department of study with the fuller effect, it need scarcely be observed, that an acquaintance with the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written, is highly important, as well as the knowledge of the Latin tongue, which confines within itself some of the most valuable truths on this important subject. But the mere English student, by whom these advantages have not been attained, need not despair; because there are many publications in his native tongue, from the perusal of which a considerable portion of biblical knowledge may be acquired.

Next in importance to the student of divinity, is the knowledge of what relates to preaching the Gospel. This is the grand business of a minister of Christ: and all the skill which can be obtained in order to preach in the most useful manner, it is his duty to acquire. The object of the former branches of study is to fill the understanding with divine truth; the intention of this is to convey that truth to the people, in the way best adapted to engage the attention, to illuminate the mind, to affect the heart, and, if possible, to communicate at the same time both pleasure and benefit. If previous studies have not led to the perusal of books on logic and metaphysics, they will here be found exceedingly profitable, as they explain the operations of the human mind, inculcate just methods of reasoning, and teach the student to arrange in the most proper order all the parts of a discourse. In the prosecution of this branch of study, treatises on rhetoric by the first

masters in ancient and modern times, and along with them the best specimens of eloquence may be read with peculiar advantage. If the student then proceed to the most valuable books on preaching, both foreign and domestic, and with accurate observation examine the rules as exemplified in the discourses of the most celebrated English and French preachers, he will derive unspeakable benefit. Nor should the study of elocution be disregarded as of little importance, when it is considered how much it conduces to render the hearers attentive to what the preacher delivers; and the want of it to leave them at leisure to think of any other subject, or to fall asleep.

But the studies of a candidate for the ministry, would be defective if he did not apply his mind to the serious consideration of the duties of the pastoral office. Lectures on this subject are highly important: and there are many excellent books which he ought to peruse with devout attention. The impression which these are calculated to make, will tend greatly to the improvement both of the understanding and the heart. If he adds to these the reading of the lives of the most eminently holy and faithful ministers, who have shone with superior lustre in the church of Christ, he will find the rules exemplified in action, and greatly profit by the fair patterns which they present. In this view the life of Baxter, Stockton, Philip and Matthew Henry, Trosse, Halyburton, Brainerd, Boston, Doddridge, Whitefield, Wesley, Fletcher, Pearce, Newton, and C. Winter will not only be highly beneficial to the student, but by repeated perusal in future years, supply the minister with new incentives to holy devotedness and fervent zeal.

Whether morals be considered a part of theology; and viewed with all the light which the sacred Scriptures shed on every relative duty, or as a distinct science, deriving its origin from the principles of natural religion, and founded on the relation in which we stand to the Deity and to mankind, they may in both respects prove highly beneficial to the student.

Where the course of studies is long enough to afford sufficient leisure, ecclesiastical history will very profitably employ the attention of the candidate for the ministry. Here he will find the benign influence of divine truth, as well as the baleful effects of ignorance, error, and superstition, displayed in the state of the Christian church. In the lives of holy and faithful ministers of Christ, he will be presented with patterns to follow, and in too many churchmen under the evil energy of unhallowed passions, and the eager pursuit of avarice and ambition, with monsters to be abhorred. When a season of leisure permits, if not the student, the minister to peruse the history of nations, both ancient and modern, the extended knowledge will expand the soul with a more enlarged and accurate view of human nature, the predictions of sacred Scripture, and the providence of God.

To mathematics and natural philosophy it has usually been judged proper to apply a portion of the student's time. As they tend to improve the mind, and peculiarly to exercise its powers, and call forth their energies, the general influence of both may be favourable to his future labours, and the hearers as well as the preacher experience their good effects.

The knowledge of the languages inscribed on the

cross of Christ, every student in divinity should labour to attain. Though in the second and third centuries, which have been commonly celebrated as superior to every succeeding age, both for the zeal and sanctity of the pastors, and the holy lives of private Christians, the generality of the ministers understood no other tongue but that which their mothers taught them, it is exceedingly to be desired, that he may be acquainted with the original languages of the Old and New Testament; at least so far as to be able to judge of the soundness of the criticisms of the greatest adepts in Greek and Hebrew literature. Should an opportunity be then or afterwards afforded for attaining a critical skill in those tongues himself, it will be a desirable acquisition. The homage paid by modern scholars to the language of ancient Rome, renders the latin tongue of unspeakable importance to a theological student, on account of the immense treasures of divine knowledge of which it is the only key. So valuable is the acquisition, that no student or minister who has it in his power, should neglect the opportunity. A few years of labour will conquer every difficulty, and give him access to invaluable stores of sacred literature, which he could not otherwise approach. To be excluded from these may justly draw from him tears of the bitterest regret.

To a minister of the Gospel every kind of knowledge will be useful; but as he is called to teach religion, it should be his great aim to be a good divine; and theology should be his first and chief pursuit. Every other branch of knowledge should be valued and sought, in proportion as it bears upon theology, and illustrates the sacred Scriptures. As to such as are remote, and may be said to furnish

entertainment rather than instruction, if he may be allowed to attend to them at all, it must be in a very superficial degree. Could a man write latin with the elegance of Cicero, or Greek with the sublimity of Plato; could he compose poetry like Virgil, and vie as a mathematician with Euclid or sir Isaac Newton, how little would they all conduce to make him a good minister of Jesus Christ; for they all lie at the remotest distance from the knowledge of a Saviour, and the doctrine which is according to godliness. The most illiterate man that ever entered a pulpit, if he understands the method of salvation, and is versed in the holy Scriptures, though he cannot utter a single sentence without a breach of the rules of grammar, is infinitely better qualified for the pastoral office, and will do unspeakably more service in promoting the salvation of immortal souls.

To the purity of the religious principles of all the dissenting tutors in the former period, we could speak with unqualified approbation. Their seminaries were nurseries of sound doctrine, in which the students were taught the truth as it is in Jesus. In this period their theological schools do not present so delightful a prospect. They decrease in number, and some of them swerve from the simplicity of the Gospel. But, however unpleasant the task may be, the historian's business is to record facts, and, without disguise, to narrate the truth whether it serve to exhibit excellence, or to expose faults.

For want of a succession of Calamys to record the lives of dissenting tutors, while the most memorable circumstances of their career were fresh in the memory of their survivors, little at this day is known

concerning many of them besides their names. With regard to some, this is a serious loss ; but as to others who were not men of eminence, and furnish no striking lessons of instruction to mankind, the world sustains little injury, and the fruit of research would not repay the labour. Superior excellence will generally find a biographer to record the salutary example.

To resume the narrative in order from the former period, the loss sustained by the academy at Attercliffe, in the death of Mr. Jollie, was not repaired by John Wadsworth, his successor, who ministered to a part of his congregation at Sheffield. His introduction was inauspicious, for it was in opposition to a majority of the church, who elected John De la Rose, Mr. Jollie's assistant, for their pastor. Mr. Wadsworth continued in the ministry there near thirty years ; but it is more than probable that he ceased to be a tutor some time before his death.

A seminary, at Kendal, in Westmoreland, under the tuition of Caleb Rotheram, D. D. minister of the presbyterian congregation in that town, is supposed by some to have been a continuation of that at Sheffield. From the imperfect memorials which remain, there is reason to conclude that he held the office for many years. His character is thus drawn by one of his students. "As a minister, his abilities were great, his delivery graceful, his performances instructive, lively, and entertaining, his sentiments nervous, his arguments strong, and his expression just. What he delivered was first tried upon his own mind. When you felt the force of truth, the weight of all had been first poised in his heart. He spoke to the edification of all, so that every particular among

you might think the address was only to himself. In sacraments he excelled. He is the fittest to declare the love of God to others, who has felt it shed abroad on his own heart. As a tutor, his capacity was equal to his department. His public spirit, desirous to propagate useful knowledge, and his tender concern for the interests of young persons, inclined him to take upon himself the direction of youthful studies, for which he was excellently well qualified. He was of a most communicative temper, and his lectures were rather the open informations of a friend, than the dictates of a master.* Dr. Rotheram's influence among the dissenters in that part of England was very considerable. After exercising his ministry for thirty-six years, he died the eighth of June, 1752, in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and the seminary died with him.

In the beginning of this period, Mr. James, Mr. Darch, and Mr. Grove presided over the academy at Taunton. Henry Grove was descended from a line of progenitors eminent for piety and goodness. He was born at Taunton, in 1683, and received his education for the ministry partly under Mr. Warren, and partly under Mr. Rowe, of London, to whom he was related. By his appointment to the academy, in 1706, being fixed at Taunton, he preached for eighteen years to two small congregations in the neighbourhood. On Mr. Darch's resignation of his office, mathematics and natural philosophy were added to Mr. Grove's department. In 1725, on the death of Mr. James, he was appointed to fill the divinity chair, and he succeeded him also in his pastoral charge.

* Dr. Rotheram's Funeral sermon by James Daye.

In both these departments he continued till his death in February, 1738.

Mr. Grove's theological learning was considerable, and his attainments in polite literature were superior to those of most of his brethren. Several papers of the Spectator were written by his pen. To the study of moral philosophy he was peculiarly attached. In every branch of knowledge requisite for a tutor, he was sufficiently skilled; and he is said to have possessed the temper and patience so necessary for those who are engaged in the tuition of youth. His discourses for the pulpit were prepared with considerable attention, and delivered in a pleasing and affectionate manner. And to crown all, he was a man of great seriousness of spirit, and of an exemplary life. His writings are numerous. Besides a great number of sermons and treatises published during his life, six volumes of discourses and tracts, and two on moral philosophy appeared after his death.

But important and valuable as all these qualities are, one thing was wanting to complete his character, and give efficacy to the whole; and the want of that rendered many of the others worse than useless. It is by the principles of religion which a tutor instils into his students, that they become a blessing or a curse to the human race; assassins of souls or instruments of their salvation. Unhappily Mr. Grove was not sound in the faith; and as he advanced in years, he contracted a more keen and rooted aversion to evangelical doctrines^r. The greater part of the students imbibed the spirit of their tutor, and going

^r See as an illustration of this remark, his sermon on the conversion of the apostle Paul. Grove's posthumous works, vol. I. p. 202—316.

forth with their new divinity they starved and scattered the flourishing churches which the pure doctrine of Christ had gathered and increased. The writer of the manuscript account of the London churches complains bitterly of their evil principles, and useless or pernicious labours.

Mr. Grove was succeeded in the academy by his nephew Thomas Amory, D. D. who was born at Taunton, in 1701. He acquired his classical knowledge under Mr. Chadwick, a noted scholar. In 1717, he went to the academy at Taunton, and on leaving it in 1722, he pursued a course of philosophy, in London under Mr. Eames. Returning to the country in 1725, he was called to assist his uncle, and taught the classics and philosophy. He was a preacher as well as a tutor, and for some years officiated along with Mr. Batson at Paul's meeting; but, in 1732, some of the people built a new place of worship, and chose Dr. Amory for their pastor. On the death of Mr. Grove in 1738, he became chief tutor in the academy, and continued to perform the duties of his office till 1759, when he accepted an invitation from London to assist Dr. Chandler, as afternoon preacher to his congregation in the Old Jewry. On Dr. Chandler's decease in 1766, he succeeded to the pastoral charge, from which death removed him in 1774, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

According to the testimony of his biographer, " he was an amiable man in private life. As a preacher, he did not meet with popularity to which he was entitled. His sermons, though practical, serious, and affecting to attentive hearers, were rather too close, judicious, and philosophical for the common run of congregations. If any thing disputable was

introduced; it was to expose the doctrine of rigid Calvinism, which he much disapproved, as giving very narrow and unworthy ideas of the supreme mind^z."

From his uncle, Dr. Amory inherited the *calvinophobia*, and this disease, instead of being milder, grew more inveterate, so that he sought relief in arianism, a system which few of the presbyterian ministers of London in his day, professed so openly as himself. The academy, under his management, fell into decay, and, at his departure it was dissolved.

The academy at Shrewsbury was, at the commencement of this period, under the care of John Reynolds and Dr. Gyles. Mr. Reynolds, the more eminent of the two, was the son of an ejected minister at Wolverhampton, and born there in 1667. Fer-vent piety adorned his early years, and he felt an earnest desire to be employed in the work of the ministry. When the time arrived for his receiving an academical education, deterred by the gloomy aspect which the affairs of the dissenters wore, he conceived that he should find a more certain and extensive field of usefulness within the pale of the established church. With this view he went to Oxford, a little before the revolution, and studied at Pembroke college for four years, under the care of Dr. Hall, afterwards bishop of Bristol. In order to enjoy the benefit of the public libraries, and the conversation of learned men, he continued in the city for another year. But his prospects from the establishment were rendered abortive by the study of the controversy on the dissent. His conscience would not per-

^z Biographia Britannica, &c. article, Amory.

mit him to conform, and he was constrained by the convictions of his mind to become a dissenting teacher. After leaving college, his first stated employment was with Mr. Noble, of Bristol, as a tutor and a preacher; but after a residence of three years, with much acceptance of his labours, both in the academy and in the pulpit, ill health compelled him to retire into the country.

In 1699, he was, with three others ordained at Oldbury chapel by four aged confessors, who still survived the sorrows of St. Bartholomew's day. For some years afterwards, he was chaplain to a gentleman's family. He was called, in 1706, to labour among the dissenters at Gloucester, with the venerable Mr. Forbes. Not without much reluctance, he was drawn from that situation in 1708, by the invitation of the congregation at Shrewsbury, and the entreaties of the neighbouring ministers who urged him to undertake the pastoral charge of that church, and carry on the business of the academy with Dr. Gyles, who was chosen at the same time.

On this two-fold office, he entered with deep humility, an exalted spirit of devotion, and dependence on divine help^a. Of his labours in the academy his

^a Life of John Reynolds. p. 121—124. He concludes his pious exercises in the following words: "O that the little academy may be blessed and taught of God! O that the young members of it may be humble, tractable, studious, inclined to God and to religion! O possess their early minds and hearts for thyself, for thy kingdom and glory! The good Lord, bless instruction, education, and studies! O, by thy grace, cure youthful lusts, prevent immoralities, licentiousness, and scandals! Let religion, seriousness, virtue, and learning grow and flourish among them! O that there and thence a seed may arise to serve thee, to bear thy name, and spread the word of thy grace about this distinguished isle.

biographer speaks in the following terms: "he carefully instructed the pupils in those parts of literature that fell to his share to teach. He made conscience of his duty in this respect; he was concerned to maintain the honour of the Christian ministry, and knowing that learning is very requisite to this end, he took great care to instil it into the minds of those under his care, and to lead them into the knowledge of those truths, that would furnish them for their work, and enable them, ~~when~~ they entered upon it, honourably to perform it. His concern was, that they might be able ministers of the New Testament. He had a great love for their souls, and was earnestly desirous to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare: he studied to make them virtuous and holy as well as learned, to have Christ formed in them, and to possess them with a godlike temper and disposition, as being necessary to render their work pleasurable and delightful to them, and to engage them to a faithful and cheerful discharge of it^b."

During ten years, Mr. Reynolds laboured in this important station, when bodily infirmities again obliged him to resign his charge; but before this time the academy was dissolved. Leaving Shrewsbury in 1718, after frequent changes of abode for several years, he at last settled at Walsal in 1721, and as far as he was able, assisted Mr. Godley, an eminently pious minister in that town, till it pleased God to give him rest from his labours on the twenty-fourth of August, 1727, in the sixty-first year of his age.

John Reynolds was a man of superior learning and piety; to the utmost ability of a feeble constitution,

^b Life of John Reynolds, p. 125.

laborious in the duties of his office, devoted to God in a more than ordinary degree, and making it the great business of life to do good. His treatises "on Zeal," "on Reconciliation with God," "the Religion of Jesus delineated," and his "confirming Catechism," &c. will impress the judicious reader with high ideas both of his intellectual and spiritual endowments.

At the beginning of this period, the Hoxton academy was under the tuition of Dr. Oldfield, Mr. Lorimer, and Mr. Capel. William Lorimer, M. A. an able instructor, was educated in the marishal college of Aberdeen, his native city. In 1664, when he was twenty-four years of age, he came to London, and having received episcopal ordination was first curate at the Charter-house, and was afterwards presented to a living in Sussex. On examining the canons of the church, many of them appeared contrary to the sacred Scriptures; and he considered his oath of canonical obedience as an unlawful oath. Quitting therefore, the establishment, he united himself to the nonconformists, at a time when none could doubt of his sincerity; for he had nothing to expect by the change of communion, but poverty and a dungeon. His first employment afterwards, was that of chaplain in a gentleman's family; and, during a few years, he had the charge of a small congregation at Lee, in Kent. In 1695, he was invited to be professor of divinity in the university of St. Andrews, but he did not accept the office. Hoxton academy enjoyed the benefit of his labours as a tutor, for which he was amply qualified by his learning, integrity, and piety. He used also to assist his brethren with his occasional

^c Reynolds's Life.

services, and was very highly esteemed by all. His old age was cheered with the liveliest hopes of eternal glory beyond the grave. He died in 1722, in the eighty-first year of his age.

The theological tutor of this academy, Joshua Oldfield, D. D. the son of an ejected minister, was born in Corington, in Derbyshire, the place of his father's charge. He spent some time at Christ's college, Cambridge, under Dr. Henry More and Dr. Cudworth; but being unable to take the oaths, he left the university without a degree. Residing for some time as chaplain to the family of a gentleman of note, a living, which became vacant, was offered to him; and some of the clergy in the neighbourhood, were employed to argue him into conformity; but they could not produce conviction, and he entered into the ministry among the dissenters. He preached first in London, then at Tooting, and afterwards, for some years, at Oxford. From that city he removed to Coventry, in 1694, where he preached in conjunction with Mr. Tong, and commenced his academical labours.

In 1700, he removed to London, and succeeded Mr. Kentish in the pastoral office at Maid's-lane, Southwark, where he laboured during the remainder of his life. He was deservedly held in the highest estimation. In the Salter's hall conferences, he took an active part, was chairman of the body when they divided, and afterwards of the party of the nonsubscribers. But while he conceived subscription to be inexpedient, he was zealous for the orthodox doctrines, and published his sentiments on the Trinity, in a sermon which united principle with practice, and combined the truth of the doctrine with its im-

portant use. He closed a very useful and honourable life in 1729, when he was seventy-two years of age.

We live at two great a distance from the period of Dr. Oldfield's labours to be able to recover from tradition, a particular account of his seminary. His qualifications were of the first order, and the Hoxton academy was under his administration in high repute; but it appears to have ceased before his death. The dissolution of an academy, where students are educated with superior advantages, is an event exceedingly to be deplored. Whether there be a more important institution on the face of the earth may justly be questioned; for there is nothing on which the diffusion of divine truth more nearly depends. In proportion as it promotes its grand object, or recedes from it, it is the greatest blessing, or the greatest curse. Where the students are taught error and false doctrine, we should rejoice at its destruction, as of a house infected with a spiritual plague, from which persons went forth instructed and inclined to destroy the souls of men. But the dissolution of an academy of truth and purity, is to be bewailed as one of the most essential injuries to the human race.

In the academy of the independents, Dr. Chauncy's successor was Thomas Ridgley, D. D. a native of the city of London. He was born in 1667, and is supposed to have received his education for the ministry under Mr. Davidson, who kept an academy at Trowbridge. On his return to his friends, he was, in 1695, appointed assistant to Mr. Thomas Gouge, whose congregation met at the Three Cranes, in Thames-street, and who is celebrated as one of the first preachers among the dissenters. He excelled in

the illustration of the sacred Scriptures, and he was equally eminent for piety, meekness, and zeal. On his death, in 1700, Dr. Ridgley succeeded him in the pastoral charge.

But it is as a tutor, that he appears in this catalogue. Theology was his department; and his fitness for the office may be safely inferred from the lectures to his students, published in two folio volumes, composing a body of divinity. That they display soundness of judgment, extensive learning, and an intimate acquaintance with the sacred oracles, every impartial reader will allow. That he was a calvinist, when we have mentioned his connections need scarcely be told; but he differs in several instances from their commonly received opinions, and discovers a freedom of thought which shews a man determined to explain the Scriptures for himself. Had his style but possessed neatness, elegance, and force, what an additional value it would have imparted to his ample treasures of sacred truth. The doctor entered deeply into the arian controversy; and ranking on the side of the subscribers, appeared from the press in their defence: indeed he was ever a zealous and powerful champion for the orthodox doctrine. After labouring in the ministry nearly forty years, and upwards of twenty in the academy, he finished his course, the twenty-seventh of March, 1734, in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

The students in this academy, while they had the happiness to receive lectures in theology from Dr. Ridgley, were instructed in classical learning, mathematics, and natural philosophy by a tutor of equal or superior abilities, John Eames, F. R. S. He was a native of London, studied the learned languages at

Merchant Taylor's School, and afterwards received an academical education for the ministry; but extreme diffidence and a defect in the powers of elocution deterred him from preaching more than one sermon. His talents, however, were not lost in inutility. He employed them with great diligence and benefit in the instruction of youth; and was for many years Dr. Ridgley's colleague in the independent seminary. His very superior attainments in the branches of science which he taught, entitle him to more than common praise, which it would be the more unjust to withhold, because excessive timidity and bashfulness veiled them so as almost to conceal his extraordinary talents. He was intimately acquainted with sir Isaac Newton, and it is said, assisted him on some occasions. By that wonderful man, he was introduced into the Royal Society, and was so highly esteemed by that learned body, as to be employed by them, with another gentleman, to draw up an abridgement of their transactions.

On the death of Dr. Ridgley, he was prevailed on to take the theological department in the academy in which he continued to labour for the space of ten years. From his active and useful pursuits, death called him suddenly away, in June, 1744. "What a change (said Dr. Watts), did Mr. Eames experience But a few hours between his lecturing to his pupils and his hearing the lectures of angels." *Laudari viro laudato* has been accounted the highest praise This praise Mr. Eames received from Dr. Watts who thus expressed himself to one of his students "your tutor is the most learned man I ever knew".

^d Biographia Britannica, vol. I. p. 175. Monthly Magazine for April, 1803.

While Mr. Eames was theological teacher, he was assisted by Joseph Densham, one of his former scholars, who had attained to a considerable proficiency in the various branches of science. Though earnestly solicited by Dr. Jennings to continue his useful labours, on Mr. Eames's decease he bid adieu to an academical life, preached for some time in the country, and afterwards retired into a private station, and died at an advanced age, in 1792.

On the death of Mr. Eames, David Jennings, D. D. was appointed divinity tutor, and Dr. Morton Savage assisted him in the other departments of literature. Both these gentlemen survived this period.

Another academy, under the patronage of the independents, sprang up in the metropolis during this period ; and as it was not unconnected with the other, may be most properly mentioned in this place. The first theological tutor was Abraham Taylor, D. D. whose father Richard was a considerable minister among the dissenters in the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. The son was also a man of note. Where he received his education we know not, but his tutors had done their duty. He was a good classical scholar, and an able divine. He took an active part in the theological disputes of the day, and left behind him several volumes of a doctrinal and controversial kind.

It was the remark of a Scotch divine, when expounding the words, "Moses's face shone, and he knew it not:" "that it was a braw thing for a mans face to shine, and him not to ken it." Dr. Taylor possessed learning, and he knew it ; and this knowledge proved the source of much misery to its possessor.

In the character of tutor, he was well qualified as to literary acquirements, but his discipline is said to have approached in some measure to that which was exercised in the universities about a century before; when corporal correction was administered to offenders, of which it is said the immortal Milton had his share. Imprudence in the management of his finances removed him from his important offices, and by consigning him to unserviceableness, penury, and dishonour, taught the importance of economy both to character and usefulness in every station. He was ordained pastor of a congregation at Deptford, on the first day of January, 1731, and he continued there about ten years. Nearly all that time he was a tutor.

Dr. Taylor was succeeded by John Hubbard, who having been assistant to Mr. Mitchel, pastor of a church at Stepney, on his death, in 1721, was chosen in his room; and fed his flock for two and twenty years with distinguished skill, fidelity, and diligence. From his sermons, at the "Berry-street lectures," it is evident that he was an able preacher, and knew well how to divide the word of truth. Had he studied composition more, they would have appeared to still greater advantage. On his appointment to the divinity chair, in 1740, he applied himself to the duties of his office with exemplary diligence; and the most pleasing hopes were entertained of many years of usefulness; but they were extinguished by his decease, in July, 1743, in the fifty-first year of his age.

He was a very able divine, and so intimately acquainted with the sacred Scriptures, that a concordance formed no part of his library. In other branches

of literature connected with theology and his office, he was abundantly skilled ; and he possessed what is infinitely better than knowledge or learning—an eminent measure of vital religion, which shone forth in the tenor of his life, and most conspicuously at the close of his days. Although the interval between health and death was short, he could lay claim to the blessedness of that servant whom the Lord, when he came, found watching. Amidst the most painful bodily affliction, he possessed his soul in patience. “ It is fit, said he, we should endure pain and trouble here, for we shall have none hereafter. There the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” “ These tabernacles were framed by God, every pin of them ; and it is fit that he should have the taking of them down in his own way. I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is best ; yet content I am to stay, if God has any further work for me to do.” “ I put my trust in thee, O Lord, Through Christ we are more than conquerors. He is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

Mr. Hubbard’s successor was Zephaniah Marryat, D. D. pastor of a church in Southwark. To good natural abilities, he added an energy of application which cannot be recommended as a pattern to others. “ In the vigorous part of life, it was my custom for some space to sit up frequently whole nights, generally two, and sometimes three in a week, the year round.” By such a mode of life it excites no surprise to hear that he had read over the works of the Greek and Latin fathers, obtained a large acquaintance with the schoolmen, and perused the writings of the most renowned champions of the church of Rome, with

• Funeral Sermon by Dr. Guyse.

the most elaborate answers of protestant divines. **He** found leisure too for still more extensive reading, and so strongly was he attached to Grecian literature, that he told a friend, "there were very few, if any of the books written by the ancient Greeks, and handed down to our time, but what he had read in their own language."

But there is an attainment of his which was still more remarkable. He employed his memory, which was retentive in an extraordinary degree, so as to commit to its keeping all the poetical and prophetical books of the Old Testament but one, and all the epistles of the New Testament, with the Apocalypse. In order to retain them with exactness, it was his custom to repeat them carefully every year. This practice he began in his youth, and for a very singular reason. Deeply convinced of his sinfulness and misery, he was afraid of falling into hell, and formed the resolution, that if that should be the case, he would treasure up in his mind as much of the word of God as he possibly could, and carry it with him to the place of torment. When faith in the Redeemer afterwards communicated to his soul the peace and consolations of the Gospel, he still continued the practice, that he might have a larger measure to carry to a better place. How well qualified such a man must have been for the office of a tutor, must be evident to every reader.

Living amidst the fire of the arian controversy, his ardent mind engaged with all its energies in the defence of evangelical truth. He was an affectionate and lively preacher. After labouring near fifty years in the work of the ministry, and eleven as a tutor, he

died in September, 1754^f. His latter end was peace and joy. To a friend who was entering his apartment a little before his death, he cried out, "I am just going to glory." He was succeeded by John Conder, who continued his valuable labours into the next period.

Besides the theological tutor, there was, in this academy, another who taught languages and philosophy. The first was Samuel Parsons, who came from Basingstoke, and at whose house in Clerkenwell, the students lived. In 1735, he removed to Witham, in Essex, and was succeeded by Dr. John Walker, a man of very superior acquirements, who, in the knowledge of the oriental languages, had few superiors in the kingdom. Plaisterer's-hall was fitted up for him and the students, and it continued to be the seat of learning till the death of Dr. Marryat, when the academy was removed to Mile End. Dr. Walker happily survived the second period.

The academy, under the care of Joseph Hallet, of Exeter, which had been raised towards the close of the former period, continued but a few years. The heresy of the tutor, and the new opinions adopted by some of the students ruined its character; parents withheld or withdrew their sons from what they accounted a spiritual pesthouse; and its existence ceased.

The Bridgewater academy was formed by John Moore, son of a minister of the same name who was ejected from a living in Dorsetshire, and who after many hardships, in 1676 settled in this town, and

^f Hall's Funeral Sermon for Dr. Marryat.

was pastor of a large and respectable congregation till his death, in 1717. The son, who succeeded him in his pastoral charge, was a tutor long before ; for in king William's reign, old Mr. Moore, with whom the students boarded, was apprehended by a warrant from the mayor, for keeping an academy. It was good for the young men to be in the house with one so well qualified to give them counsel.

Under the tuition of Mr. Moore, the pupils are said to have enjoyed great advantages from his superior attainments in science, and his easy and agreeable method of conveying knowledge. When the *ario-mania* raged in the west, he too was seized, some of his students left him, and the character of his academy sustained a serious injury. It is seldom that in advanced years, such a transition is made. By multitudes of students and young ministers it has been embraced ; but arianism is not usually an old mans refuge. Mr. Moore died in 1747, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

There was another seminary under the care of a John Moor, who, after entering on the ministry at Wattisfield, in Suffolk, a little before the revolution, removed to Tiverton, in Devonshire. A pamphlet published by him in 1721, entitled " a calm Defence of the Deity of Jesus Christ, in Remarks on a Letter to a Dissenter at Exeter," though short, displays great zeal in defence of the orthodox doctrine. This however, is not to his dishonour. To take an active part in a controversy of principles of prime importance to Christianity itself, provided it be done with a Christian spirit, cannot be to a mans dispraise. From the late Dr. Flexman's having received his

education in this academy, Mr. Moor must have lived at least to 1740.

The academy, at Colyton, in Devon, after Mr. Short's removal, was continued by Matthew Towgood, a man of considerable learning, who was trained up for the ministry under his father of the same name, ejected from Semly, in Wiltshire. Early in this period, 1716, Mr. Towgood removed from Colyton to Shepton Mallet, and, in 1729, from thence to Poole, in Dorsetshire. Whether he carried the academy with him from Colyton, is unknown. Sometime after his settlement at Poole, he quitted the ministry, and engaged in trade, but without success. Where a person has been brought up to business in early life, the habits, though suspended for a season, may be resumed; and his exertions be attended with prosperity. But the habits of a minister, who has been trained up to study from his childhood, are so different from those of a man of business, that he will seldom be found to succeed when he quits his own line.

Under Mr. Porter at Alcester, not ministers only, but gentlemen and merchants too received their education. After his death, the students were removed to Stratford upon Avon, and entrusted to the tuition of John Alexander, the dissenting minister of that town, who continued his labours till about the middle of this period. He was distinguished for his skill in oriental literature. At his removal into Ireland, the academy is supposed to have ceased. He died about 1740^s.

Dr. Charles Owen, minister at Warrington, brother of James Owen, the celebrated tutor of Shrewsbury, rendered important benefit to the dissenting churches by dedicating his talents to the labours of the seminary. By his learning, piety, and amiable disposition, he possessed considerable qualifications for the office. His academic sphere was not extensive. But to the man who from time to time sends forth a few into the vineyard of Christ, who prove faithful and successful labourers, what praise is due! Besides the pieces "on Ordination" which display his learning, a small treatise entitled "the Wonders of redeeming Love," shews both by the sentiments and the manner in which they are conveyed, that he was a scribe well instructed into the kingdom of heaven, whose preaching was calculated to illuminate the understanding, and to impress the heart. He died at an advanced age in 1746.

At Bridgnorth, about 1726, Mr. Fleming, minister of that town, began to teach academical learning to a few candidates for the ministry. Like many other of the dissenting seminaries, it depended entirely on the tutor, and ceased with his life, or with his leisure.

At Bedworth, an academy was formed by Julius Saunders, a man of Christian nobility, for he was descended from Laurence Saunders who was burnt in Coventry Park, in 1555, for his attachment to the protestant faith. Many of his descendants were ministers of the Gospel, and eminently faithful to their charge. This was the character of Julius, both in his congregation and his seminary. In his ideas of church government, he is said to have been a strenuous independent. He was succeeded by John

Kirkpatrick, who also discharged the duties both of **Pastor** and tutor, and continued till near the close of this period.

The important labours of **Mr. Samuel Jones**, at **Gloucester**, and afterwards at **Tewkesbury**, were, unhappily for the church of Christ, suspended by his death, a few years from the commencement of this period. Soon after this event, the academy was removed to **Carmarthen**, in **South Wales**. **William Evans**, minister of the dissenting congregation, had the charge of a theological institution in that place, early in the eighteenth century; and is said to have been the first dissenting tutor in the southern division of the principality. He was a man highly respected for his piety and learning. Death removed him from his labours in 1720.

As his decease happened at no great distance of time from that of **Mr. Jones**, **Thomas Perrot** being appointed his successor both in the congregation and the academy, the **Tewkesbury** institution was transferred to him; and the public library, belonging to it, removed to **Carmarthen**, with the benevolent design of educating ministers for the churches in **Wales**. **Mr. Perrot** had been ordained at **Knutsford**, in 1706, and afterwards removed to **Newmarket**, in **Flintshire**. His character was that of an able minister and a learned divine; and under his tuition were trained up many who in their generation proved eminently useful to the **Cambrian** churches.

After **Mr. Perrot's** death in 1733, the academy was removed from **Carmarthen**, and committed to the care of **Vavasor Griffiths**, who had received his education under **Mr. Jones**. By him the academy was

opened at Llwynllwyd, near the Hoy, Brecknockshire. He was considered as an able tutor, and his deportment both in the academy and the congregation procured him very high respect. He continued his labours till his death, in 1741.

Evan Davies, the pastor of a church at Haverfordwest, who had been educated under Dr. Ridgley and Mr. Eames, being appointed his successor, the academy was removed to that place. But in a few years, on the settlement of Mr. Davies with a congregation in the neighbourhood of Carmarthen, it was restored to its former station : and Samuel Thomas, minister of Carmarthen, united in the labours of tuition. Towards the close of this period, Mr. Davies removing to a congregation in Essex, Mr. Thomas became divinity tutor, and Dr. Jenkin Jenkins, from Lanvillier, in Montgomeryshire, was appointed to assist him. Both these gentlemen survived the second period.

This academy, from the time of its removal from Tewkesbury, had received its support from the joint funds of the presbyterians and independents in the metropolis. But Mr. Thomas having embraced opinions different from those of his predecessors, the independents withdrew their aid, and towards the conclusion of this period, formed a new academy at Abergavenny, and entrusted it to the care of David Jardine, the minister of the place.

Thomas Hill, who was ejected for nonconformity from Shuttington, in the county of Warwick, besides other services rendered to the dissenting cause, left a son of the same name, who employed considerable talents and extensive knowledge in the tuition of youth for the ministry, at Finnerd, in Derbyshire.

His labours began before the commencement of this period, and continued to 1720, when death removed him from his field of usefulness.

His successor was Samuel Latham, M. D. a man highly celebrated for his attainments in polite literature, as well as in those branches of knowledge more immediately pertaining to his office. He had been assistant to Mr. Hill, and he carried on the business of the academy at Derby, with great reputation till his death, in 1754. The institution, though among the most considerable in England for the number of its students, ceased with his life.

John and David Jennings, two celebrated tutors among the dissenters in this period, were the sons of John Jennings, of Christchurch, Oxford, who was ejected from Hartley Waspil, in Hampshire. John, the eldest, succeeded his father in the pastoral office at Kibworth, in Leicestershire; and, in 1715, he engaged in the instruction of young men for the ministry. From Kibworth, he removed to Hinckley, in 1722; and, in the month of July in the following year, he died in the prime of life. However mysterious the dispensations of Jehovah may appear, he ever acts towards his servants with infinite wisdom and love. The most useful are taught not to presume because of their usefulness, on length of days. To every young tutor a lesson is given by the removal of Mr. Jennings, to labour with zeal and diligence in his work, and place no dependence on future years.

The learning of this excellent man is said to have been considerable; but it must imply the consideration of his time of life; for profound learning cannot

be the attainment of youth, it must be the result of patient and persevering exertions during a long succession of revolving years. For piety, which is the mainspring of acceptable and successful exertions in the cause of Christ, he was truly eminent. He is celebrated for his solicitude in the improvement of time ; but who ever made a very conspicuous figure among the good and great in the kingdom of the Redeemer, who was not. Two small treatises remain to attest his worth ; one "on Preaching Christ," and the other, "on particular and experimental Preaching." Such is their excellence, that the tutor has not rendered full justice to his pupil, who has not put them into his hands, and recommended them to his most serious and repeated perusal.

For some years after Mr. Jennings's death, the academy suffered a temporary suspension, but was happily revived in 1729, by Philip Doddridge, D. D. one of his pupils, whose praise is in all the churches. His tutor, perceiving his extraordinary talents, had urged him to pursue his theological studies with a view to the future instruction of youth ; and had also pointed him out to his friends as the fittest person to adopt and improve his mode of tuition. Dr. Doddridge's situation at Kibworth admitted of a large portion of time for study, and he improved it. Young ministers are sometimes afraid of a country village, and despise the small and rustic audience. But it is in such retirements, that some of the first characters were formed, who have afterwards appeared with distinguished honour in the most numerous and respectable congregations.

At Midsummer, 1729, Dr. Doddridge commenced tutor, in the twenty-seventh year of his age, at Mar-

ket Harborough, the place of his residence. In the end of the same year, a call from a congregation at Northampton, seconded by the intreaties of his most judicious friends, constrained him to remove to that town. While Kidderminster derives more celebrity from Richard Baxter being its minister, than from its manufactories, and Bedford is oftener spoken of for the writings of John Bunyan, than the deeds of its ancient dukes, Northampton has acquired no mean proportion of its fame from being the place of Dr. Doddridge's residence and labours.

During the twenty-two remaining years of life, he was unwearied in his attention to the duties both of the congregation and the seminary. He had between thirty and forty students usually under his care, the number was increasing with his fame, and by his talents and exertions, the Northampton academy stood first in character among the places of instruction for the dissenting ministry. There was always an assistant to the doctor, and sometimes more than one. Job Orton, and Samuel Clark afterwards of Birmingham, were among his labourers in this station. About two hundred students, it is computed, enjoyed the benefit of his tuition, of whom a hundred and twenty entered on the pastoral office. His life will be more fully detailed in the biographical part of this history. Dr. Doddridge died at Lisbon, in 1751, and was succeeded in the academy by Dr. Caleb Ashworth, who removed it to Daventry, the place of his ministerial charge. He outlived the present period.

To remedy the loss sustained by the dissolution of so many academies, towards the close of this period several new ones were instituted. A less

literary seminary, than any hitherto noticed, was formed under Samuel Pike, a minister in London, but it continued only for a few years. By the patronage of the independent fund board in London, John Lavington, minister of St. Mary Ottery, in Devon, was appointed tutor of a theological school, and began his labours there, in 1752. A seminary of a very different kind was instituted by the presbyterians at Warrington, under the superintendence of Dr. Aiken, Dr. John Taylor, and Mr. Seddon. In 1760, the Exeter academy revived under auspices nearly similar to those in which its former state of existence ceased. Of all these the third period will furnish an account.

The baptists as yet had no academy of their own. Many of their ministers, especially of the particular or calvinistic branch, had no academical education, nor would many of their churches have admitted such a man as their pastor. "They are (says the writer of a manuscript on the state of the London congregations), very fond of private meetings for exhortation and prayer. These are their academies from which the most able go forth into the ministry." Such of them as had a regular education were indebted to the independents; while the presbyterian seats of learning were chiefly resorted to by the candidates for the ministry among the general baptists.

SECTION II.

METHOD OF EDUCATION IN THE DISSENTING ACADEMIES.

ON the abilities of the tutor, and his mode of instruction, the intellectual character of the pupils will in a considerable degree depend. In established institutions, where a professorship brings with it opulence, honour, and independence, and is besides conferred by the hand of patronage, which owes to none an account of its gifts, both the learning and industry of the man are more dubious. But in private seminaries, where the emoluments are neither great, nor certain, nor independent, and where the attendance of scholars rests wholly on the opinion entertained of the fitness of the instructor, it is more than probable that the tutors will be men both of talents and exertion.

The condition of the students in a dissenting academy serves to second the diligence of the tutor. In those established churches, where the most valuable ecclesiastical preferments depend not on merit or eminence of theological knowledge, but intirely on the interest of a nobleman, a corporation, or a minister of state, a young man who has flattering hopes of success from these quarters, is at least under strong temptations to slacken his diligence, and to place little reliance on superior acquirements. When, on the other hand, a student knows that every thing depends on his own exertions, that the general voice

of a congregation can alone raise him to the situation in life to which he aspires, and that no interest can procure it for him, he has certainly a more powerful stimulus to vigorous application ; for ignorance of his profession presents to him no other objects but poverty, disgrace, and contempt. In these respects, it must be allowed, that both tutors and students in dissenting academies possess no inconsiderable advantages, and have every thing to influence them to labour with unwearied assiduity.

The same branches of learning, which were taught in the former period, as necessary qualifications for the ministry, still retained their place. The veneration, however, which the first race of tutors felt for the method of education which they had received in the universities, began gradually to subside. The second generation thought it was possible to make improvements, and that there was no presumption in the adoption of new modes of teaching theology and science. Ever since the reformation, the literary world has been in a progressive state, and additional advantages have been afforded to every succeeding generation. To reject these, and adhere to methods which have been in use for centuries, because they were established by men of the first rank in literature at the time, is forcibly to arrest the progress of knowledge, and prevent her from bringing her augmented treasures within their walls. From various causes, this is unhappily often the case in institutions of ancient date ; and there has been but too much reason to complain of a stubborn attachment to former regulations, and a reluctance to admit acknowledged improvements. In the university of Dublin, justly

celebrated as an eminent seat of learning, Aristotle's logic is taught to the present day.

From this stationary spirit, the seminaries of the dissenters were in a great measure free. All were of very modern origin, and some of them intirely new. Both tutors and students breathed in a pure air, and having no cause for an idolatrous veneration of antiquity, they sought every improvement within their reach, in order to enrich their course of study. The newest books in the several departments of science displaced the older and more imperfect manuals of the preceding age; and some of the tutors drew up abstracts as text books for their own use. In theology, the systems composed by the most celebrated professors in foreign universities were employed as a syllabus for their lectures. Turretine's compend was preferred by one, and Pictete's by another. Dr. Jennings's theological lectures were founded on "Marckii Medulla Theologiæ," and his course of Jewish antiquities, on "Godwin's Moses and Aaron." If we may judge of his commentary on the former by his elucidation of the latter, his instructions in divinity must have been peculiarly excellent; for his two volumes on Jewish antiquities, for accuracy of statement, and judicious and valuable information on which dependence may be placed, have nothing equal to them in the English language. The whole abstract of Dr. Doddridge's course of lectures was of his own composition; and became afterwards the text book of several of the academies in the following period.

The method of conducting the education of the pupils in the dissenting seminaries of this period, may be judged of from the accounts handed down to us of

the labours of three of the tutors, Mr. John Jennings, Dr. Doddridge, and Dr. David Jennings.

From the pen of Dr. Doddridge, we receive a full statement of John Jennings's system of education, from which the following is an extract.

"Our course was the employment of four years, and every half year we entered upon a new set of studies, or at least changed the time and order of our lectures.

"The first half year we read geometry or algebra thrice a week, Hebrew twice, geography once, French once, Latin prose authors once, classical exercises once. The second half year we ended geometry and algebra, which we read twice a week. We read logic twice, civil history once, French twice, Hebrew once, Latin poets once, exercises once, oratory once, exercises of reading and delivery once. For logic, we just skimmed over Burgersdicius, and then entered on a system composed by Mr. Jennings; a great deal of it was taken from Mr. Locke, and we had large references to him and other celebrated authors almost under every head. This was the method Mr. Jennings used in almost all the lectures he drew up himself. He made the best writers his commentators."

"The third half year, we read mechanics, hydrostatics, and physics twice, Greek poets once, history of England once, anatomy once, astronomy, globes, and chronology once, miscellanies once, and had one logical disputation in a week. On some of these branches we had a system drawn up by the tutor, in others we made use of the most celebrated publications. The fourth half year we read pneumatology twice a week, the remainder of physics and miscellanies once.

wish antiquities twice. Our pneumatology was taken up by Mr. Jennings. This with our divinity, which was a continuation of it, was by far the most valuable part of our course. Mr. Jennings had bestowed a vast deal of thought upon them, and his discourses from them in the lecture room were admirable. For Jewish antiquities, we read an abridgment of Mr. Jones's notes on Godwin, with some very curious and important additions."

"The fifth half year we read ethics twice a week, critics once, and had one pneumatological disputation. Our ethics were a part of pneumatology. Our critical lectures were an abridgment of Mr. Jones's. Our pneumatological and theological disputations were of very considerable service to us. The sixth half year we read divinity thrice a week, Christian antiquities once, miscellanies once, and had one homily of a Thursday night. For Christian antiquities, we read "Sir Peter King's Constitution of the primitive Church," with "the original Draught" in answer to it. We consulted "Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*" for illustration, and had recourse sometimes to "*Sinceri Thesaurus*."

"The seventh half year, we read divinity thrice a week, ecclesiastical history once, had one sermon, and one theological dissertation. The last half year we read divinity once a week, history of controversies once, miscellanies once, and had one theological disputation. For the history of controversies, we read "Spanheim's *Elenchus*." The miscellaneous, for this half year, contained a brief historical account of the ancient philosophy. On the art of preaching and pastoral care, Mr. Jennings gave us very excellent advice, and some valuable hints on the head of non-

conformity. We preached this last half year, either at home or abroad, as occasion required, and towards the beginning of it were examined by a committee of neighbouring ministers, to whom that office was assigned at a preceding general meeting."

"Mr. Jennings never admitted any into his academy, till he had examined them as to their improvement in school learning, and capacity for entering on the course of studies which he proposed. He likewise insisted on satisfaction as to their moral character and the marks of a serious disposition."

"The first two years of our course, we read the Scriptures in the family, from Hebrew, Greek, and French into English. Every evening an account was taken of our private studies. We were obliged to talk Latin within some certain bounds of time and place. Every Lord's-day evening, Mr. Jennings used to send for some of us into the lecture room, and discourse with each apart about inward religion. Mr. Jennings allowed us the free use of his library, which was divided into two parts. The first was common to all, the second was for the use of the seniors only, consisting principally of books of philosophy and polemical divinity, with which the juniors would have been confounded rather than edified. At our first entrance on each we had a lecture, in which Mr. Jennings gave us the general character of each book, and some hints as to the time and manner of perusing it. We had a fortnight vacation at Christmas, and six weeks at Whitsuntide^h."

Of the method of education which Dr. Doddridge pursued in his own academy, his biographer, Mr.

^a Dr. Doddridge's Works, vol. V. p. 559—567.

Orton has given a full statement in the sixth chapter of the memoirs of his life. The following are the outlines expressed in his own words.

“ The orders of the seminary were such as suited a society of students ; in a due medium between the rigour of school discipline and an unlimited indulgence. It was an established law that every student should rise at six o’clock in the summer, and seven in the winter. As soon as they were assembled a prayer was offered up, and they retired to their closets till the time of family worship. The doctor began that service with a short prayer for the divine presence and blessing ; some of the students read a chapter of the Old Testament from Hebrew into English, which he expounded critically, and drew practical inferences from it ; a psalm was then sung, and he prayed. In the evening, the worship was conducted in the same method, only a chapter in the New Testament was read by the students from Greek into English, which he expounded ; and the senior students, in rotation, prayed. He recommended it to them to take hints of his illustrations and remarks, as what would be useful to them in future life. He advised them to get the Old Testament, and Wetstein’s Greek Testament interleaved in quarto, in which to write the most considerable remarks for the illustration of the Scriptures, which occurred in his expositions, and in their own reading, conversation, and reflections.”

“ Soon after breakfast, he took the several classes and lectured to each about an hour. His lectures were generally confined to the morning.”

“ One of the first things he expected from his pupils was to learn Rich’s short-hand, which he wrote himself, and in which his lectures were written ;

that they might transcribe them, make extracts from the books they read and consulted with ease and speed, and save themselves many hours in their future compositions. Care was taken in the first year of their course, that they should retain and improve that knowledge of Greek and Latin which they had acquired at school, and gain such knowledge of Hebrew, if they had not learned it before, that they might be able to read the Old Testament in its original language. To this end, besides the course of lectures in a morning, classical lectures were read every evening, generally by his assistant, but sometimes by himself.

“Systems of logic, rhetoric, geography, and metaphysics were read during the first year of their course, and they were referred to particular passages in other authors upon these subjects, which illustrated the points on which the lectures had turned. To these were added lectures on the principles of geometry and algebra. After these studies were finished, they were introduced to the knowledge of trigonometry, conic sections, and celestial mechanics, consisting of a collection of important propositions taken chiefly from sir Isaac Newton, and demonstrated independently of the rest. A system of natural and experimental philosophy, comprehending mechanics, statics, hydrostatics, optics, pneumatics, and astronomy was read to them, with references to the best authors on these subjects. This system was illustrated by a neat and pretty large philosophical apparatus. Some other articles were touched, especially history, natural and civil, as the students proceeded in their course. A distinct view of the anatomy of the human body was given. A large system of Jewish antiquities,

which their tutor had drawn up, was read to them in the latter years of their course. In this branch of science likewise, they were referred to the best writers on the subject. "Lampe's Epitome of Ecclesiastical History" was the groundwork of a series of lectures upon that subject, as was "Buddei Compendium Historiæ Philosophiæ" of lectures on the doctrines of the ancient philosophers in their various sects.

"But the chief object of their attention and study during three years of their course, was his system of divinity in the largest sense of the word; including what is most material in pneumatology and ethics. In this compendium were contained, in as few words as perspicuity would admit, the most material things which had occurred to the author's observation, relating to the nature and properties of the human mind, the proof of the existence and attributes of God, the nature of moral virtue, its various branches, means, and sanctions: under which head the natural evidence of the immortality of the soul was largely examined. To this was added some survey of the state of virtue in the world, from whence the transition was easy to the need of a revelation, &c. The evidences were produced in favour of that revelation which the Scriptures contained. The genuineness, credibility, and inspiration of these sacred books were then cleared up at large, and vindicated from the objections of infidels. When this foundation was laid, the chief doctrines of Scripture were drawn out into a large detail; those relating to the Father, Son, and Spirit, to the original and fallen state of man, to the scheme of our redemption by Christ, and the offices of the Spirit as the great agent in the Redeemer's kingdom. The nature of the covenant of grace was particularly

stated, and the several precepts and institutions of the Gospel, with the views which it gives us of the concluding scenes of our world, and of the eternal state beyond it. All was illustrated by a very large collection of references, containing perhaps one lecture with another, the substance of forty or fifty octavo pages, in which the sentiments and reasonings of the most considerable authors on all these heads might be seen in their own words. It was the business of the students to read and contract these references in the intervals between the lectures, of which only three were given in a week, and sometimes but two. This system his pupils transcribed."

"Besides the expositions in the family, critical lectures on the New Testament were weekly delivered, which the students were permitted and encouraged to transcribe, to lead them to the better knowledge of the divine Oracles. Polite literature he by no means neglected. In the last year of the course, a set of lectures on preaching and the pastoral care was given: these have lately been published. While the students were pursuing these important studies, some lectures were given them on civil law, the hieroglyphics and mythology of the ancients, the English history, particularly the history of nonconformity, and the principles on which a separation from the church of England is founded."

"One day in every week was set apart for public exercises. At these times, the translations and orations of the junior students were read and examined. Those who entered on the study of pneumatology and ethics, produced in their turns a thesis on the several subjects assigned them, which were mutually opposed and defended. Those who had finished

ethics, delivered homilies on the natural and moral perfections of God, and the nature of moral virtue; while the senior students brought analyses of Scripture, the schemes of sermons, and afterwards the sermons themselves, which they submitted to the examination and correction of their tutor. He sometimes gave his pupils lectures on the books in the library; going over the several shelves in order; informing them of the character of each book, and its author if known; at what period of their course, and with what special views, particular books should be read; and which of them it was desirable they should be most familiarly acquainted and furnished with, when they settled in the world."

"The doctor's manner of lecturing was well adapted to engage the attention and love of his pupils, and to promote their diligent study of the lectures. When the class was assembled, he examined them in the last lecture whether they understood his reasoning; what the authors referred to said upon the subject; whether he had given them a just view of their sentiments, arguments, and objections, or omitted any that were important. He expected from them an account of the reasoning, demonstrations, Scriptures, or facts contained in the lectures and references. He frequently inculcated on his students, the necessity of preaching Christ, if they desired to save souls; of dwelling much on the peculiarities of the Gospel scheme, and the doctrines of Christ and the Spirit; of considering their own concern in them, and endeavouring to feel their energy on their own spirits, that they might appear to their hearers as giving vent to the feeling of their heart on its darling subjects."

The method of instruction adopted by Dr. David Jennings may be learned by the following brief quotation from the account of his life.

"The business of the lecture room commenced every morning at ten o'clock, with a short prayer, when a chapter was read from the Greek Testament into English by the students, each construing a verse. The doctor then read it, adding such expository notes and observations as suggested themselves at the time. The junior students, after this, withdrew into another room to lecture on the classics, in mathematics, or logic, as they respectively offered in the arrangement of the course under Dr. Savage. The elder classes attended on Dr. Jennings, who went with them through a course of lectures on Jewish antiquities and divinity. The former, at once a week, lasted four years; the latter, being read twice a week, were completed in three. The text book, in the first, was "Godwin's Moses and Aaron;" in the other "Marckii Medulla Theologiæ;" which though a short system, hinted, the doctor thought, almost at every topic which came into theological discussion. His lectures on Godwin formed a valuable independent work, after that writer's method: but those on Marck consisted of notes to his Medulla, often very brief, but sometimes running into dissertations. Before the academical term, which was for five years, was finished, the doctor gave a series of lectures on preaching; and took an opportunity to intermix some on architecture, heraldry, and medals. On Wednesday morning he gave an hour to the junior students in reading, and explaining his own treatise on the globes and orrery; and in receiving from them, and correcting a trans-

slation of "Lampe's Compendium of Ecclesiastical History¹."

From these specimens no unfavourable opinion will be formed either of the dissenting tutors, or of the system of education which they pursued: most of the alterations from the former period will be acknowledged to be improvements. As to the application of the academies to their various branches of learning, for vigour and perseverance they yielded the palm to no college in Christendom.

During this period, the funds for the support of dissenting seminaries could boast of some improvement. To Mr. Jones, of Tewkesbury, and afterwards to the academy at Carmarthen, the presbyterians communicated pecuniary aid; and it is probable, that in others they assisted students who stood in need of support. But the greater part of the young men, who were trained up for the ministry among them, were in such circumstances as to be enabled to defray the expences of their own education. Perhaps the independents were more liberal in this branch of expenditure. For a time, they co-operated with the presbyterians in the support of the Welch academy; and when, from a dislike of the sentiments of their tutor, they could do so no longer, they then formed a new institution of their own. In London too, they contributed to the maintenance of the academies under Dr. Ridgley and Abraham Taylor, and though there were some whose friends defrayed the expences of their tuition, the greater part was indebted to the generous exertions of the independent fund board, and the King's Head

¹ Protestant Dissenters' Mag. for 1798. p. 87.

society, which have both continued their truly benevolent exertions to the present day*.

To some individuals, who devoted a portion of their substance for this excellent purpose, great praise is also due. William Coward, a merchant in London, who died in 1738, holds the first place; and to the present day there has not appeared a man to whom the dissenting academies are under greater obligations. He was eminently pious, but eccentric in the highest degree: yet when we find such a man rendering the most important service to the Christian cause, we are more fastidious than wise, if we cannot overlook or bear with his eccentricities, and venerate his benevolent heart. If the palm of victory could not have been snatched from his hands, he would have found a rival in sir John Hartopp, who left by will ten thousand pounds for the instruction of youth for the dissenting ministry: but his heirs robbed him of the honour. Taking advantage of a defect in the conveyance, they grasped the bequest to themselves. Conscience, however, stood the friend of the seminaries, and having wrung the heart of one of them with its iron hand, constrained her afterwards to give up her part; and almost one half of the legacy of the worthy baronet was rescued to the use for which it was originally designed. From these funds, the academies, under Dr. Doddridge and Dr. Jennings, received a liberal support.

Notwithstanding these sources of maintenance, there was still a deficiency of funds. A much greater

* The former of these institutions consisted of a number of gentlemen of that denomination, who united for the purpose of educating young men for the ministry. The latter, which takes its name from the place where they held their meetings, consisted of independents too, and had the same object in view.

number of the students stood in need of support than in the former period; and therefore, though the finances had increased, the academies decreased. It is to be feared, that in some instances this was owing to a decay of zeal for the ministry; but in others, it arose from a want of that support which opulent Christians, among the dissenters, could easily have given. Nor has the necessity of still more efficient funds as yet ceased.

Opposition still lifted up her frowning face against the dissenting seminaries. The most remarkable instance of this was in the case of Dr. Doddridge, who was scarcely settled in Northampton, when some dignitaries of the church of England commenced a prosecution against him in the ecclesiastical court, for teaching an academy: and though he had many friends who wished to screen him from their enmity, they could not be prevailed on to desist. The doctor was exceedingly grieved at the apprehension of being compelled to lay down the office of tutor, and bid adieu to those extensive plains of usefulness which he had formed. But the affair being represented to the king by some persons of rank and influence, a stop was put to the prosecution by his express command: he thus confirmed the declaration which he made on ascending the throne, "that, during his reign, there should be no persecution for conscience' sake".

¹ Doddridge's Life, p. 213, 214.

CHAP. VI.

OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS DURING THIS PERIOD.

SECTION I.

NUMBER AND RANK OF THE DISSENTERS.

THE first praise of a religious body is the piety of its members. Numbers contribute to its glory and strength: when there is a progressive increase, they feel confidence in their cause, and are animated to more vigorous exertions. During the former period, the dissenting communion could exult both in the number of its friends, and in their distinguished piety. What its outward state was from 1714 to 1760, is now to be the subject of inquiry. While the difficulty of ascertaining with precision, how many persons belonged to a sect scattered over a whole country, will be obvious to all, enough may be collected to form an idea which, on the whole, will be sufficiently accurate.

In a country favoured with a good government, there will be a gradual increase of population, in proportion to the means of subsistence, which will be augmenting at the same time. As this was now the case in England, the dissenters felt the happy effects in the enlarging state of the families of which their congregations were composed. In a class in society of sober and virtuous manners, mostly between the

extremes of enervating luxury and squalid poverty, the augmentation was likely to be greater.

Besides this natural source of increase, the faithful and fervent preaching of multitudes of zealous ministers gradually collected a harvest of proselytes from the established church, and from a body of people in England almost as numerous—those who were not in the habits of attending any place of worship. The addition of numbers from this source, was greater than from the increase of population, but more unequal, as it depended intirely on the character and talents of the dissenting preacher.

The equity of government contributed also to augment the number of dissenters. The spirit of persecution which prevailed under the dynasty of the Stewarts deterred the timorous and feeble-minded from joining the proscribed sect. But under the house of Hanover, their state was widely different; they were regarded as the firmest friends to the government of the country, they enjoyed liberty of worship without molestation, and a multitude of people quitted the church for the conventicle.

During this period too, the prejudices against dissenters were gradually losing a considerable portion of their former virulence. While the events of the civil war and its consequences were fresh in the memory of the men of that and of the next generation, the hatred to dissenters was keen and inveterate. The spirit of the succeeding reigns kept the flame of discord still alive. But after the last of the Stewarts reposed in the grave, the temper and measures of the new government no longer stirred the fire, and the prejudices of the people gradually cooled, and in ~~some~~ were intirely extinguished. Oxford, indeed,

still retained all the fury of the preceding age: and the jacobite principles, which were triumphant in that university, furnished a host of advocates for the intolerance of former times. But though their efforts were powerful and extensive, multitudes escaped their influence; the general spirit of the country was favourable to liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment, and of course favourable to the dissenting interest.

In consequence of these concurring causes, hundreds of dissenting congregations continued to increase. Many new ones also were formed in the course of this period. A few members of a congregation, living at a distance of some miles from the place of worship, felt the inconvenience, and wished to have the ordinances of God brought to the vicinity of their dwellings. The occasional services of their pastor exciting the attention of their neighbours, a new society was formed, and settled under the care of another minister. Sometimes a zealous Christian, fixing his residence in a place where there was no dissenting meeting within his reach, exerted himself to introduce their worship; and, in a few years, by the success of his endeavours, enjoyed the pleasure of having the ordinances of religion constantly dispensed. Sometimes the zeal of a minister led him to open a house for the service of God, in a place where he thought the Gospel was not preached in purity: he went uninvited to attack the strong holds of Satan: success crowned his labours, and the planting of a dissenting church was the result. In many parts, where means of increase so extensive were not afforded, by preaching in villages on Lord's-day evenings, and at other times, many were added to the

dissenters, and their congregations were increased. From the memoirs of Dr. Doddridge, it appears that this was the practice in his vicinity, and it was adopted in other parts of England.

While by these means the dissenting cause received an augmentation of its strength, there are unfavourable circumstances which must be thrown into the opposite scale. The operation of the test act is mentioned in several writers of this period as unfavourable to nonconformity, by drawing off a portion of the richer families by means of occasional conformity on entering an office, to a constant attendance at least on the established worship. But its effect has been magnified beyond the truth. Persons of little religious principle, sighing for a more modish faith, and wishing to appear with a grace in the fashionable world, used the test as a stepping stone from the meeting house to the church; but if they had not found it lying just in their way, they would have made another, or, at any rate, have plunged through the mud to kneel in the hallowed fane. But to a truly religious society, all things considered, this is not a serious loss: their departure has its advantages, as well as disadvantages; and where the Gospel is preached in purity and with zeal, their places will be filled with hearers better than themselves.

The two most successful enemies to increase of dissenters were indolence and error. In many places, indolence diffused through their congregations its benumbing influence. It could not be said that the doctrine of the preacher was contrary to truth. But he did not breathe his soul into his sermons. His words appeared to freeze upon his lips. The people

felt the chilling impulse, and on their faces might be read cold insensibility, and frozen indifference. Some yawned out the hour, and others slept. Those who slept, began to consider that sleeping at meeting was dearer than at church, and prudently removed to the parochial institution, where they could enjoy their nap at less expense. Others feeling no interest in the service gradually dropped off: or if the older people would not leave the place which they had attended from their earliest years, the children, feeling neither the same partiality nor the like restraints, bid the conventicle a final adieu. In this way, many congregations shrunk to the skeleton of what they were before.

But during this period, error was the destroying angel of dissenting congregations. Instances might be adduced in which a preacher of superior talents has attracted or retained a numerous congregation in the metropolis or other populous cities, though his sentiments have been far from the orthodox creed. But in the ordinary course of things, in proportion as dissenting ministers have departed from those religious principles which were held by the men ejected from the establishment for nonconformity, they have reduced the number of their audience. Whenever they have departed from what is called calvinism, the congregation has evidently felt the change; it has been arrested in its growth, and, after a time, visibly decayed.

In whatever communions arminianism may have crowded places of worship, it never had this effect among dissenters; but almost without an exception, was the first stage of the congregational decline. Arianism may be called the second stage of the disease,

and where it filled the pulpit, invariably emptied the pews. This was the case not only where a part of the congregation, alarmed by the sound of heresy, fled from the polluted house to a separate society ; but where no opposition was made, and all remained without a murmur in the original place. In numerous instances, the preacher, full of the wisdom of the serpent, sought by hiding the monster from their view, to draw them over by stealth to the new theology, and unveiled his sentiments only as the people were able to bear them without a frown. Though, at last, his wishes were crowned with success, yet the decay began, and gradually consumed the growth, the strength, and the life of the society, till a large congregation was reduced to a handful. Where socinianism found an entrance, its operations were quicker than those of the arian creed, and more effectual ; flourishing societies were reduced to a few families, which being animated with zeal for the new opinions, or indifferent about any, chose to continue to support the modes of worship to which, from education or use, they were attached. In many places, socinianism was the abomination of desolation, and consigned what had been formerly the house of prayer and of the assemblies of the saints, an undisturbed abode to the spiders and the bats.

To such as are unacquainted with the history of dissenters during this period, the statement may appear to stand in need of the strongest proofs to support its reality. These are furnished in abundance by men of that time, some of whom had embraced the new theology. In 1730, Strickland Gough, a young dissenting minister, whose sentiments in religion, whatever they might be, were certainly far remote

from calvinism, published a pamphlet, entitled, "an Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest." Bitterly he complains of the declining state of the congregations with which he was connected, and forebodes their utter ruin. "Though every one is sensible it gradually declines, yet no one has endeavoured to recover it. I believe this is owing to our disagreement as to the causes of its decay ; and unless the causes are found out, a remedy cannot possibly be applied, but it must continue consuming till it is quite worn out and spent".

Instead of that reformation among the presbyterians, for which Mr. Gough so strenuously pleads, there is reason to conclude that their affairs proceeded in the same course, for sixteen years afterwards a second mourner appears, and with the same complaints. The decay of the dissenting congregations is as loudly bewailed by Nathaniel Neal, son of the respectable historian of the puritans. His sentiments and connections were of the modern kind. He perceived the congregations which had adopted his creed gradually declining ; and in 1746, in the bitterness of his soul, he wrote "a free and serious Remonstrance to Protestant Dissenting Ministers, on occasion of the decay of Religion ; with some Observations on the Ordination of Youth for the Ministry." The state of things among them he describes in the following terms : " The little success you have met with of late, has been a subject of general complaint among us of the laity. For it cannot fail being a grievous and distressing consideration to every pious and thoughtful Christian who frequents our public assemblies, to observe how indifferently most of them

are attended; how cold and formal the worship is of many, who dare not or choose not to be absent; and what little hope remains that the rising generation should fill the seats that their fathers have left, or are soon likely to leave vacant." "And the point I would submit to your consideration is, whether the public prayers and instructions of our religious assemblies have been of late conducted in such a manner, as to have had no influence in abating, or their due influence in promoting the constancy and zeal wherewith they were wont to be attended." Mr. Neal's counsels are good so far as they go, but he unhappily overlooks the chief source of the evil.

A third testimony to the same painful state of things, is borne by Job Orton, minister at Shrewsbury. Like the two former, his chief intercourse was among the presbyterians, and those of them who were the friends of the new theology; and it is evident from his own account that the arians were at least as congenial to him as the calvinists. In his "Letters to Dissenting Ministers," lately published, his complaints of the decay of their congregations are loud and frequent. Of the three, he alone appears to have understood the cause; and wherever this decay is mentioned, he ascribes it to the departure of the ministers from the principles of the Gospel. A testimony from such a

ⁿ Page 5.

^o Page 7.

^p When you have the opportunity of seeing and observing more of the state of religion in our congregations, you will find what I have long since found (and every year that I live increases my conviction of it), that when ministers entertain their people with lively and pretty things, confine themselves to general harangues, insist principally on moral duties, without enforcing them warmly and affectionately by evangelical motives; while they neglect the peculiar of the Gospel; never or seldom display the grace of God, and the

man has tenfold weight. So sensible was Mr. Orton that the decrease of the dissenting interest was chiefly owing to the principles and preaching of men of the new opinions, that he expresses his astonishment at the decrease of an orthodox congregation in his neighbourhood, and mentions it as the only instance of the kind that he ever knew¹.

But a more unexceptionable judge in this cause is Dr. Doddridge, whom Mr. Gough's pamphlet brought

love of Christ in our redemption; the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by a constant dependance upon the Holy Spirit of God for assistance and strength in the duties of the Christian life, their congregations are in a wretched state; some are dwindling to nothing, as is the case with several in this neighbourhood, where there are not now as many scores as there were hundreds in their meeting places fifty years ago. But where, by trade and manufactures, new persons come to the place, and fill up the vacant seats, there is a fatal deadness spread over the congregation. They run in the "course of this world," follow every fashionable folly, and family and personal godliness seems in general to be lost among them. There is scarcely any appearance of life and zeal in the cause of religion, which demands and deserves the greatest.

Whereas, on the contrary, I never knew an instance where a minister was a pious, serious man, whose strain was evangelical and affectionate, but his congregation kept up, though death and removals had made many breaches in it. And in general, ministers of this latter sort have had more respect and affection from their people than the former." Orton's Letters, vol. I. p. 100, 101.

"Mr. Cardale, of Evesham, died lately. He was minister there forty years. He wrote some things in favour of socinianism. He had about forty people to hear him at last, having ruined a fine congregation by his very learned, critical, and dry discourses, and an extreme heaviness in the pulpit, and an almost total neglect of pastoral visits and private instruction." Orton's Letters, vol. I. p. 154.

¹ God has removed good Mr. Harrop, of Wem, to a better world. I wish the congregation may be supplied with a suitable minister; but they are reduced to a very low state by the incursions of the methodists and other disorderly people. It is, I think, the

into court, and who confirms the decision given by the three gentlemen who have been just named. In his "Free Thoughts on the most probable Means of reviving the Dissenting Interest," he expresses his firm persuasion that the preaching of evangelical doctrines in a plain, spiritual, experimental, and affectionate way, is the only thing which can preserve a congregation from decay, and revive it when it is decayed. So much did the existence of dissenters in his view, depend on this one thing, that he expresses his sentiments in the following terms. "Such is the taste of the generality of the dissenters; a taste which I apprehend they will still retain, whatever attempts may be made to alter it. And I just take the liberty to say, that I conceive this turn of thought in our people to be the great support of our interest, and not the little scruples which you hint at, nor even those rational and generous principles of liberty which you so clearly propose, and so strenuously assert. And I cannot but believe, if the established clergy and the dissenting ministers in general, were mutually to exchange their strain of preaching, and their manner of living but for one year, it would be the ruin of our cause, even though there should be no alteration in the constitution and discipline of the church of England. However you might fare at London, or in some very singular cases elsewhere, I can hardly imagine that there would be dissenters enough left in some considerable counties, to fill one of our largest meeting places." "We have then advanced thus far, that he, who would be generally agreeable to dis-

only instance I have known of a serious, active, laborious, and truly evangelical preacher and pastor, who has seen his congregation sinking under him. Orton's Letters, vol. II. p. 27,

senters, must be an evangelical, an experimental, a plain, and an affectionate preacher.”

In confirmation of the opinions of these men, it was observed that the decrease was in those parts of the country, where arianism prevailed. Devonshire and its neighbourhood were deeply infected. Lancashire, Cheshire, and Warwickshire drank large draughts of the intoxicating cup. The general effect was a stop to farther increase. In some congregations the decay was immediate; in others, the society became like a building in which the mortar had lost its principle of cohesion, and mouldered away. For a time it was as large as before, but its strength was gone; gradually one stone fell off after another, and every succeeding winter levelled a portion of it with the ground. In this way, many flourishing societies were destroyed.

Between 1720 and 1730, the dissenters sustained a loss in numbers from another quarter. A list is mentioned of nearly thirty of their ministers, who, in the space of a few years, forsook their communion, and took orders in the church of England¹. Most of them were young men, and nearly all of the presbyterian denomination. Several of them were sons of ministers. In the catalogue stands the name of the Rev. Strickland Gough, the writer of “the Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest.” The

¹ Doddridge's Tracts, vol. II. p. 277, 278.

² Among the names are found the following; Mr. John Hardy of Nottingham, Mr. Biscoe of Newington Green, Messrs. Seagre, Hasset, Stander of Newbury, the two Jacombs, Bellamy, two Billios, Horsley, Johnson, Hay, Maddox, Naylor, Myonet, Quinsey, Benjamin Owen, Orre, Harrison, Richards, Winter, Inman,

first and great reason, and which occupies the greater part of his pamphlet, is their ignorance of their principles, which he states with considerable energy, and at the same time, exposes the enormous faults of the established church, whose terms of admission are so opposite to truth and liberty, that they cannot be viewed but with abhorrence. But within a year after he wrote his book, he subscribed with his hand to those forbidding terms which he had reprobated with so much severity.

By their former friends it was remarked, that most of these young ministers loudly complained of a spirit of imposition among the dissenters, which had arisen from the Salter's-hall controversy, and inveighed bitterly against the spiritual tyranny exerted over the consciences of ministers, in requiring to know their faith in certain doctrines; and they heavily complained of it as a great discouragement in the exercise of free inquiry. A fair specimen of this complaint may be seen in the latter part of Mr. Gough's pamphlet.

Persons ignorant of mankind would say, "these men are to be depended on as champions for the dissent, as long as they draw the breath of life." But an adept in the knowledge of human nature, will feel no surprise at their tergiversation. They were high spirited youths, of a warm imagination, of ardent passions, an abundant share of pride, and little principle. When they had emptied their quiver of all the shafts of liberty and free inquiry, they coolly went over to the other side. It is an edifying sight. Those ministers who strained at the gnats of the dissenters, swallowed the camels of the church. Those who spurned at the idea of declaring their belief of one

article of faith, and turned away with indignation from the antichristian requisition, subscribe thirty-nine articles, and profess their unfeigned assent and consent to the whole contents of the Book of Common Prayer to boot.

During this period, the church was unhappily the receptacle of the refuse of the dissenting ministry. When any of them became lazy, or proud, or vicious, and thus forfeited the affections and support of their flock, if they had but a smattering of learning they found it not difficult to obtain a place among the clergy of the establishment. Some instances there are of dissenting ministers that conformed, who would have been an honour to any community; but if all the names were written down, they might be contained in a nut-shell. The examples are rare, in which it may not truly be said, "that the loss of them is a gain to the dissenters, and the gain of them a loss to the church'."

^t Dr. Calamy makes the following reflection on the conduct of these ministers. "It was much taken notice of, that most of those who conformed about this time, complained bitterly of a spirit of imposition which was working among dissenters, and inveighed against it with freedom as a hardship and discouragement, should throw themselves into a church and legal establishment that was strict for full subscription, and left no room for the least alteration and abatement to such as were scrupulous and tender-spirited. This was, by many, apprehended to have an odd aspect, and not to be very consistent."

The writer of the London manuscript speaks his sentiments with greater boldness and freedom. "As to those ministers who appeared against what they called imposition in the Salter's-hall controversy, that is against declaring their faith as to one article of Christianity only (though never offered as a term of communion, or of exercising the ministerial office), and strenuously defended the right of private judgment; it might reasonably have been expected

Instead of lamenting the departure of such men, the only subject of lamentation is, that they ever had a place in the dissenting ministry, or that they did not carry along with them fourscore or a hundred more of the same spirit and sentiments with themselves. It had been a glorious riddance, as it would have delivered the nonconformists' communion from men who, instead of being a blessing to a congregation, were a curse.

By the author of the London manuscript, a very particular account is given of the number and state of

the cause of nonconformity would have received from them considerable encouragement, especially that they themselves, by their own example and practice, would have kept steady to it; but it proved the reverse; for of those nonsubscribing gentlemen, and such as had imbibed their principles, there have at least twenty persons, who called themselves dissenting ministers, conformed to the church of England since 1718; and if the laity had travelled the same road in an equal proportion, that interest would have received a greater shock. And here it is worthy of remark, that those gentlemen, who could not digest an article of faith, are on a sudden so enlightened, as to be convinced that it is their duty to subscribe thirty-nine, while those ministers, that could honestly subscribe an article, have, to a man, kept steady to the dissenting interest, and have been instrumental in supporting it with honour. It is evidently manifest, that if ever the dissenting interest, and with it the power of godliness is preserved, the old protestant doctrines must be maintained, and steadily adhered to; for wherever the contrary are given into, so far they are both in the way to destruction."

An extract from one of bishop Warburton's letters to bishop Hurd, will form a proper close to this note, as it shews his opinion of many of those who came to him for ordination. "It goes against my stomach, not to say my conscience, to furnish our dear mother church with such a household as are always ready to obey her call. But we will have a public invitation, though you, like the steward in the Gospel, will be forced to search the bye lanes and highways for the lame and the blind to partake of the entertainment." P. 378.

the dissenting congregations in the metropolis, in a comparative view of them, in 1695 and 1730. In 1695, the number of meeting houses occupied by the presbyterians and independents was fifty-seven, and of congregations, sixty; because six congregations were accommodated in three meeting houses. In 1730, the number of meeting houses was fifty-eight. Of these, twenty-eight were in the same state as in 1695; and the rest were enlarged or rebuilt in a more spacious manner, so that they could contain four thousand hearers more than in 1695. As to the state of the congregations, fourteen had increased, fifteen had declined, and twenty had remained nearly in the same state. Twelve had been dissolved; and ten new ones had been formed. The final estimate is that the number of dissenters was at least as great, if not greater, in 1730 than in 1695; but as he thinks that London, during that time, had increased one sixth part in its inhabitants, there was a decrease in proportion to the sum of the whole population. Two reasons he assigns for this decrease. The first was the influence of the test act among the superior classes. The second and principal one was the growth of error, arminianism having crept in, which, he says, leads to arjanism and socinianism.

If from the representation which has been given, it should be supposed that the cause of dissent was losing ground, the inference will not be just. In many parts of England, arianism could not find an entrance. It was like the hurricane of southern regions, which runs in streaks, carrying desolation in a line; but leaves the greater part of the country uninjured. There was a great multitude of flourishing congrega-

tions in most parts of the country, which were increasing with a steady progress. This was so remarkably the case in Northamptonshire and the neighbouring counties, that Dr. Doddridge, in his answer to Mr. Gough, describes the state of nonconformity there, in the following terms. "I know that in many of the congregations the number of dissenters is greatly increased within these twenty years; and the interest continues so to flourish, that I am confident some of our honest people, who converse only in their own neighbourhood, will be surprised to hear of "an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decay."

A list of the dissenting congregations by Daniel Neal, in 1715 and 1716, enabled us to give a statement of their number at the death of queen Anne. The most accurate account which can now be obtained of them at the accession of George the third, is from a more particular catalogue drawn up by Josiah Thompson, a minister of the baptist denomination, in 1772. Though it was made twelve years after the close of this period, on considering all the circumstances, it seems highly probable, that it contains nearly the number of the dissenting congregations in 1760. Mr. Thompson's statement contains the name of every town and village where a congregation met; but as it would occupy too much room to give it in detail, it must therefore suffice again to specify the result of his inquiries, by marking down the number in each county.

The first column expresses the whole number, the second those of them which were baptists.

Bedfordshire	19	17	Bro ^t . forw ^d .	569	2
Berkshire	14	5	Lincolnshire	23	
Buckinghamsh.	25	14	Middlesex	73	
Cambridgeshire	23	8	Norfolk	21	
Cheshire	24	3	Northamptonsh.	39	
Cornwal	6	2	Northumberland	40	
Cumberland	17	4	Nottinghamshire	17	
Derbyshire	33	8	Oxfordshire	11	
Devonshire	57	13	Rutlandshire	5	
Dorsetshire	24	2	Shropshire	11	
Durham	14	2	Somersetshire	53	
Essex	49	15	Staffordshire	14	
Gloucestershire	46	24	Suffolk	32	
Hampshire	29	9	Surry	12	
Herefordshire	9	3	Sussex	20	
Hertfordshire	18	9	Warwickshire	24	
Huntingdonsh.	12	7	Westmoreland	3	
Kent	46	30	Wiltshire	40	
Lancashire	66	17	Worcestershire	18	
Leicestershire	38	22	Yorkshire	67	
Carr. forw ^d .	569	214		1092	3

SOUTH WALES.

Brecknockshire	13	4
Cardiganshire	18	4
Carmarthenshire	40	12
Glamorganshire	24	6
Pembrokeshire	16	10
Radnorshire	9	4
Monmouthshire	21	14
Carr. forw ^d .	141	54

NORTH WALES.

Bro ^t . forw ^d .	141	
Anglesey	1	
Carnarvon	1	
Denbighshire	5	
Flintshire	1	
Merionethshire	4	
Montgomerysh.	7	
	160	
England	1092	3
Total	1252	4

During this period, the denominations were gradually changing places in the scale of numbers. Presbyterian superiority, which, at the beginning was so greatly pre-eminent, existed now no more. Such was the effect of error and indifference, and of the manner of preaching and living which they introduced.

The increase of the independents was considerable. They continued stedfastly attached to those doctrines of religion which were held by the fathers of nonconformity. Of an independent church falling into arianism, perhaps an instance cannot be found: if at any time, a minister, or a member swerved from the truth, he usually sought refuge among the presbyterians. In consequence of this, their congregations, undefiled by the errors of the times, felt nothing of their desolating influence, but in most places, kept up, or increased their numbers. The Salter's-hall controversy was favourable to their cause; for many of the presbyterians, disgusted with their own ministers for espousing the party of the nonsubscribers, and suspecting the soundness of their faith, forsook their communion, and joined the congregational churches.

In the progress of the period, a new source of increase was opened to this denomination. When the old race of good presbyterian ministers was removed by death, in many places young men of different sentiments and spirit were appointed their successors. Those persons, who relished the doctrine of their predecessors, unable to continue under their unacceptable ministry, separated and formed congregations of their own, which usually assumed the independent forms. Though these congregations were small at first, they gradually increased by additions from the world, and from the original hive, till they at last

became more numerous than those from which they derived their existence.

During the course of this period, not a few of the presbyterian congregations adopted the independent discipline, and joined that body. Where the orthodox doctrine retained its full hold of the hearts of the people, on the decease or removal of their minister, though presbyterians, they had recourse to the academies of the independents, being certain of finding their students sound in the faith. The introduction of a minister of that denomination was followed by the adoption of the independent discipline. The churches under the pastoral care of the writers of this history, furnish examples of such a change, which took place also in other congregations in Hampshire. The operation of this cause has continued till the present time, and under the third period has increased in every part of England.

As the two divisions of baptists differed from each other in religious sentiments, they were dissimilar in their outward condition. Arminianism, among the dissenters has, in general, been a cold, dry and lifeless system, and its effects upon the heart have been commonly weak and spiritless. With the general baptists, who avowed it to be their creed, this was remarkably the effect, and their congregations did not increase. Besides, from facts too stubborn to be bent, and too numerous to be contradicted, arminianism has been among them the common road to arianism and socinianism. Their ministers and congregations were the first who openly professed these opinions; and their societies felt the decay which these opinions have uniformly produced.

Among the particular baptists we are presented with a very different aspect of affairs. They were all calvinists, but from the want of an education for the ministry, many of them were not very judicious; and some of them abused the doctrine. An ignorant arminian preacher blunders through his system in a tolerable manner, but ignorance in a calvinist makes dreadful work. On the whole, the orthodox doctrine prevailed among the particular baptists; and its influence appeared in the increase of many of their congregations, and in the establishment of new ones in different parts of the country.

On the rank or station of those who composed the body of dissenters, what was said under the former period may almost suffice. If a nobleman or two still worshipped with them, it was the utmost of which they could boast. A few baronets remained. Some of the gentry were not ashamed of patronising the cause. In the army and navy, there were officers who lived in their communion. But the strength of their body was found among the active classes in society. They could name many of the first merchants in England among their stedfast friends. From a considerable number of the manufacturers, they received the most zealous support. Tradesmen of every class formed their principal strength in every part of England. In many counties, a large body of farmers were attached to their principles. Mechanics of all descriptions composed a large portion of their congregations in towns, and labourers in husbandry in country villages. From this enumeration it will be seen that the dissenters consisted chiefly of those

classes of people which are the bones, and muscles, and sinews of civil society.

Of the increase of wealth in the country during this period, the dissenters had their proportion, and from their frugal habits probably more. Perhaps the baptists, where congregations at first were generally of the poorer classes, rose in their circumstances more perceptibly than either the presbyterians or independents. The quakers were increasing considerably in wealth. Of the poorer classes in the community, the societies of the Wesleyan methodists were chiefly composed: and the mass of Mr. Whitefield's followers was of the same order. In both there were persons of property, but, perhaps, more among the latter than the former: the Foundery could not boast of a peer or a peeress in the list of its devotees, but the Tabernacle could of both.

SECTION II.

BOURS OF MINISTERS AND THEIR SUPPORT.

the kingdoms of this world it has been deemed necessary to establish offices; the possessors of which should enjoy *otium cum dignitate* (dignified leisure), reward of merit, and an ornament to the throne. In an office of honour and ease does not exist in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He is too great to have splendid attendants to add to his dignity; his business is too important to allow any one of his servants to live in idleness, who is able to work; and his rewards consist not of worldly glory and repose, but of a crown of eternal blessedness in heaven after his labours shall have ceased at death.

Labour is the delight as well as the duty of Christ's faithful servants, as long as mind and body are capable of exertion. Cessation from labour, though accompanied with every outward comfort, is a state the most painful mortification, and the severest exercise of self-denial. The Lord himself was a man of incessant labour, from the day he entered on his ministry till the hour when he expired on the cross. His apostles inherited their Master's spirit, and persevered in active service all their days. These are patterns whom a minister is called to imitate; in proportion as he has imbibed the spirit of his office, he will, by labouring in season and out of season, be a follower of Christ and his apostles. Through age or premature infirmities, he feels

himself unable to perform the various duties of the ministry, however amply he may be provided with outward accommodations, to be laid aside from his beloved work is the most severe trial of patience which he could be called to endure.

The spirit of the nonconformist ministers, who would not refrain from labour, though they knew that bonds and imprisonments awaited them, is a lovely imitation of the twelve apostles of the Lord. Their successors, who filled up the first period of this history, did not degenerate from their principles and conduct, and were certainly the most laborious ministers in England.

Of those in the second period that adhered to the same doctrine, and they were by much the majority of the dissenting ministers, a large number continued to walk in the same steps. Two services on the Lord's day constituted the ordinary measure of public duty. But as each service lasted two hours at least, and singing did not occupy so much time as it does now, the labour of the minister was fully as great as in the three services of the present day. If credit is to be given to the testimony of judicious men, who can remember the second period, and who were then themselves the disciples of Christ, the prayers and sermons, though longer than modern patience could bear, were much more edifying than those of the present age. In their prayers they used to enter more particularly into the cases of their hearers, and to plead the promises of God with great fulness and fervency, a practice which the briefer supplications of their successors will not now allow them leisure to do. Their sermons were also exceedingly edifying, for they gave a clear and compre-

hensive view of the doctrines of the Gospel ; and they confirmed every thing by proofs from the sacred Scripture, which the more attentive hearers were accustomed to mark down, and afterwards to read and examine carefully at home.

By the greater part of the ministers, much pains was still taken in the composition of their discourses, if not to attain elegance of style, at least to collect important thoughts. Too many of the independents lagged behind their own age, and discovered a strong partiality for the phraseology which had been in vogue about fourscore years before. Some of them, however, appeared with respectability among contemporary writers. By the presbyterians in general, more attention was paid to purity and elegance of style. The well educated baptists were on a level with the independents ; but there were many illiterate preachers in this denomination, to whom the science of composition was altogether unknown.

To the private duties of their office, they still continued to attend with the same assiduity as before. Pastoral visits were frequently made. The afflicted were considered as a peculiar charge : and the catechising of youth was a general practice which some attended to in the course of the week ; while others performed it in public at the intervals of worship on the Lord's day, and excited considerable attention in the older members of the congregation. In every branch of duty they had been favoured with such excellent patterns in their predecessors, that it was only necessary to follow their steps, which they had been taught to do from their early years.

Among those who embraced the new sentiments,

the change in the external circumstances of worship was only gradual. From the force of habit, and a desire to conceal their creed, most of them, for a time, proceeded in the former mode. But the influence was felt both by the ministers and their congregations; their fervour in worship decayed, and the length of the service was gradually curtailed. The other duties of a minister fell by little and little into disuse. Individual instances of remarkable diligence might be found among them; but the strictness of pastoral inspection, which had prevailed before, was now too commonly relaxed.

Towards the close of this period, public worship began to occupy the evening of the Lord's-day. In the cities and great towns, some services of this kind had always existed. But evening lectures began now to be introduced by the more zealous ministers in the country; and they continued to increase till they have become almost universal throughout the kingdom. Multitudes of thoughtless people, who would not have entered a meeting-house at another time, were attracted by curiosity to hear the Gospel preached. From the influence of divine truth, a succession of converts was raised up, who have proved the strength and ornament of the dissenting churches.

Some have objected to evening lectures, as interfering with the order of families, and impeding the exercises of domestic religion. The advocates for the practice say, that prudent masters of families may so arrange domestic duties, as to be performed in the intervals of public worship, and not to clash with the evening service in the house of God. All will allow that one half, at least, of the congregation, which

attends at a lecture, would not have spent the time so profitably at home, and that they have been to thousands an inconceivable blessing. The general adoption of evening lectures was most probably derived from the methodists.

In the course of the second period, it became the fashion among the dissenting ministers, to read their sermons. On the continent, both among catholics and protestants, the practice was long unknown. It early found an entrance into England, and became the mode among those who wished to be distinguished from the puritans. Brief outlines of the sermon were made use of by some of the nonconformists to assist the memory; a few had the whole placed before them, which they looked at occasionally; but the greater part made themselves masters of their subject, and preached without notes. By degrees reading slipped into general use with those who wrote their discourses at full length, not only among the presbyterians but the independents too; and there were few of the London ministers in either of these denominations who did not pore very much over their notes. Towards the close of the period, the practice was at its height. Not to use notes was, at that time accounted methodistical; and in the metropolis, reading was the evidence of dissenting regularity. But there was always a body of men in the country, and some in London, who cultivated a freer mode, and when they had made themselves masters of their subject, laid up the ideas in order in their mind, and formed the language at the moment of delivery.

From the sermons published by the ministers of

this period, an idea may be formed of the taste in preaching among the dissenters. The discourses of Grosvenor, Harris, and Wright present a specimen of the more orthodox presbyterians; those of Thomas Newman and Chandler, of such as were somewhat more remote from puritanism. In the sermons of Watts, Doddridge, Hurriion, Guise, and Matthew Clark, we see both the doctrines, and the manner of stating them which prevailed among the independents. Foster and Gale have left examples of the manner of preaching among the general baptists: while Gill, Brine, Joseph Stennet, and Wilson have handed down to us the models which the particular baptists preferred.

From these specimens, it appears that in simplicity of method there was a great improvement; and in many of them, the language was considerably more modern. For talents and literature, they could vie with nearly all who had entered the dissenting ministry after the revolution; but in some of the most substantial excellencies of preaching, they yield, without a contest, the palm of victory to the more eminent nonconformists.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, a peculiarity in the worship of the baptists of both denominations, who, in the first period of their existence, refused to sing the praises of God in their assemblies, intirely ceased. During the earlier part of their existence, psalmody was generally excluded as a human ordinance. But some congregations having adopted it about the beginning of the former period, a violent controversy was excited". The assembly

" Mr. Isaac, a minister, who published a treatise against singing, with an appendix, charges the practice with error, apostasy, human

of the particular baptists which met in London in 1692, took the subject into consideration, and without determining any thing authoritatively, recommended it earnestly to the controversialists on both sides to call in their publications, and cease from their disputes. Happily greater deference was paid to their judgment than is common in such cases; and their recommendation produced a cessation from strife. The congregations being thus left to their own calm reflections, gradually introduced psalmody into their worship^x. For a long time, however, in many of them the melody of psalms and hymns could not be endured: and it was not till about the middle of the last age, that the praises of God were sung in every baptist church^y.

tradition, prelimited forms, mischievous error, carnal forms, carnal worship, &c. Crosby, vol. IV. p. 300. Had Christianity not been a religion from God, the folly of its professors would long ago have plunged it into utter ruin.

^x Crosby, vol. IV. p. 266—271.

^y The method, employed by Mr. Keach to introduce psalmody into his congregation is worthy of record, as it marks, in the strongest colours, the inveteracy of opposition in some of the flock, and the patience and moderation of their pastor. Being convinced that it was an ordinance of Christ for the edification of his church, he published a treatise on the subject, and also took much pains to enlighten their minds by private conversation. The first step to success, was the permission of the church to sing a hymn at the conclusion of the service, in the celebration of the Lord's supper. After stopping here for six years, leave was obtained to extend the psalmody to days of thanksgiving. At last, after fourteen years perseverance in this method, by a regular act of the church it was in a solemn manner agreed to sing the praises of God in their ordinary worship, every Lord's-day; only five or six members expressed their dissent. "This," says the historian, "if I am not mistaken; was the first baptist church which practised this holy ordinance."

Though the church consisted of some hundred members, so far

As this period was advancing to a close, a change took place in the worship of some among the presbyterians, which too plainly proved them to be men of a different spirit from the founders of the dissent: they grew weary of extemporary prayer, and sighed for a liturgy. To some of the nonconformists, a ritual appeared tolerable, by none desirable. These modern Israelites in the wilderness now long to return into Egypt to the cucumbers and the onions. In Lancashire especially, the subject was agitated with the greatest eagerness, while it had its individual adherents in other parts of the country. By the orthodox it was generally, or rather universally opposed; it appeared as needless a thing as that the moon should be made to shine in the day-time, in order to aid the sun. Its warm advocates were the ministers and peo-

were they and Mr. Keach from imposing on the few who were dissatisfied, that it was agreed to sing when the prayer after the sermon was concluded, that those who could not conscientiously join, might go away. They were also assured, that the church would not be offended at their departure, "because they did not look on singing the praises of God as an essential of communion, nor for the being but the comfort and well-being of the church."

So highly offended, however, were the opponents of psalmody, that they forsook his communion; and having influenced some others to unite with them, they formed a church of their own, in the worship of which the singing of the praises of God did not compose a part. In this sour and dumb way they persevered, till, on the death of their pastor Edward Wallin, Mr. Weston was chosen his successor, who would accept their invitation only on condition of their permitting psalmody to be introduced into their public worship. Whether their attachment to him was more potent than their aversion to psalms and hymns; or whether they were now become sensible of the impropriety of neglecting a divine ordinance, from whatever cause it was, they assented to his proposal, and have ever since tuned their voices to songs of praise like other Christian congregations. Crosby, vol. IV. p. 298—301.

ple who had embraced the arian and socinian systems, especially the younger men who filled the pulpits in the presbyterian congregations. To that denomination alone, all the glory of wishing for a liturgy, was confined. Neither the independents, nor the particular baptists ever admitted the idea into their minds. It was the gift of Pierce and Hallet to those who embraced their creed.

After a season of anxious expectation, the reformed liturgy made its appearance at Liverpool, in 1752. Natural religion was the substance of the book: of revealed but little appeared; and the love of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners and the Mediator between God and man, was rarely mentioned, and could scarcely obtain an ascription of gratitude and praise*.

* As the testimony of Job Orton is usually regarded with veneration, by those dissenters who have renounced the Calvinistic creed, the reader is referred to the following passage of his letters to dissenting ministers, in confirmation of our remark. "The Liverpool liturgy is finished. My chief objections against it is, that it is scarcely a Christian liturgy. In the thanksgivings mention is made of Christ as a preacher and an example, but nothing more. In the collects his name is hardly introduced. A few conclude "through Jesus Christ," but most omit it. His resurrection is only once mentioned; and his intercession not directly. Not a single text that speaks of his dying for sin, or acting as a Prophet, Priest, and King. The Spirit is quite banished from this liturgy. I question whether his name once occurs, or whether a person who was to judge of Christianity only by this liturgy would know that there was a Holy Ghost. The people are taught by the minister's address, to expect forgiveness upon confession, repentance, amendment, forgiveness of others, and confidence in the divine mercy, but not a word of Christ or faith in him; nor, as I remember, any act of the mind of which Christ is the object, nor any motives or considerations taken from the Gospel. Grieved I am, and very much so, to see such an almost deistical composition." Vol. I. p. 80, 81.

By the authors of this remarkable production it was loudly proclaimed, that one design of it was to reconcile the members of the church of England to the dissenting worship. But the pious people of that communion, who derived edification and comfort from the evangelical and devotional strain of the common prayer, must have found themselves in Nova Zembla, when the presbyterian teacher read the Liverpool liturgy with his frozen lips, and must have fled with shivering and horror from the place.

When this new liturgy was ushered into the world, it was eagerly embraced by some, who rejoiced at the prospect of laying aside extemporary prayer, which was become irksome and incongenial to their taste and feelings. Where such ministers had been successful in their attempts to mould their congregation to their own ideas, it was silently submitted to, and by a few as zealous as their pastor for the new sentiments, cordially welcomed as the messenger of heaven. In some societies, the more serious part vigorously opposed its introduction. One minister who was determined to use it without the people's leave, lost his whole congregation: they went over to the methodists, and left him to read his liturgy to the walls. Another having tasted the sweetness of a form of prayer, soon afterwards conformed.

While the liturgy was disgraced by such effects, it met with a strenuous opposition from some ministers who had lived in habits of friendship with its admirers and its authors. Mr. Orton, besides his severe censures on the spirit and sentiments of the liturgy, objected to the very principle of forms of prayer, and stated his objections in a letter to Mr. Seddon, a socinian presbyterian minister of Manchester, who was, as

may naturally be supposed, one of its most strenuous advocates^a. To Mr. Orton's opposition was added

^a The substance of Mr. Orton's letter, which was intended to convey his sentiments on liturgies to the Lancashire ministers, is as follows: "Reasons for free (or extemporary) Prayer.

"The *first* set of reasons is from general principles.

"1. The chief end of prayer is to improve our own spirits, by cherishing a sense of the divine presence and dependence upon God, exciting reverence and love, and promoting benevolent affections. This is best done when the thoughts are fixed, and the affections warmly engaged.

"2. The arguments urged by the nonconformists in behalf of free prayer have never been satisfactorily answered.

"3. It is reckoned an honour to dissenting ministers that they can use free prayer, which the generality of the clergy cannot or will not use.

"4. The promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 26.), seems to include his assisting us both in matter and manner. Matt. xviii. 20.

"5. The difficulties attending free prayer are lessened, if pains is taken to prepare the heart by greater fervour of devotion.

"*Secondly*. Some reasons, from a regard to the credit and usefulness of ministers, influence my judgment in this instance.

"1. I apprehend the use of stated forms will lessen a minister's esteem among his people.

"2. The use of forms will be likely to lead men into a dry, cold, abstract way of praying.

"3. It may have a bad influence on a minister's general temper, and lessen his ready utterance in spiritual things.

"4. It will be likely to render a minister less fit for prayer on particular occasions. Bishop Patrick in early life was eminent for a devotional spirit. In the advance of life, paying a visit to an old friend a dissenter, he was desired to pray in the family. He seemed at a loss for expressions. At the conclusion he said, 'it is gone out of my head.' 'Ah, sir (said the master of the house), I fear it is gone out of your heart: you have made a sad exchange for your lawn sleeves and mitre.'

"*Thirdly*. There are some reasons which weigh with me, taken from the dispositions of dissenters, and state of the public.

"1. Dissenters in general are most inclined to free prayer; and

that of Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, who expostulated with the presbyterian liturgists on their conduct, and reminded them of the holy fervour and devout affections with which their Heywoods, their Jollies, and their Newcomes used to offer up their prayers to God, without the need or use of forms. But, alas! he forgot that the Lancashire ministers of his day had departed from the principles which were held by their venerable predecessors, and which produced in them that divine ardour which communicated a flame to their prayers, and gave them so weighty an influence over the souls of the people.

the pleasure and advantage of it are one great reason for nonconformity. On inquiry in my own congregation, and others where I am intimate, I find that the most serious and exemplary Christians are for free prayer. Those who are lukewarm, though sober and virtuous, seem willing to admit forms, or rather are indifferent about the matter. (I have good reason to believe that this is the case in Lancashire, though I did not care to say so.)

“ 2. I apprehend the stated use of forms will prevent the rising generation from desiring and labouring to obtain the gift of prayer. There will be a danger of the loss of family prayer; at least of those social meetings for prayer, which have a most favourable aspect on the revival of religion.

“ 3. The use of forms will be likely to lead lukewarm dissenters to church, and the serious and fervent to lay preachers and methodists.

“ 4. It is not likely that dissenting ministers in general, or even in one county, will adopt forms, it may occasion a difference in affections, and create division.

“ 5. The introduction of forms among dissenters, will be an obstruction rather than a help to the farther reformation of the church of England, if a desire to introduce dissenters should be a part of their scheme.

“ 6. I fear the introduction of forms will be injurious to the dissenting interest, which is the cause of truth and liberty, will sink religion among us yet lower than it is, and quite drive away the Spirit of God.” Orton's Letters, vol. I. p. 16—24.

Sampson's hair was now cut, and his strength was lost.

Those ministers who had entered on their office in a professed belief of the doctrines of Calvin, had learned at that time to pray without book, and were able to continue the practice after they had embraced a more fashionable system; and habit made some of them averse to a different mode. But the younger preachers, who had been arianised or socinianised from their early years, in general found extemporary prayer an irksome task, and were extremely eager to take refuge in forms. Since that time presbyterian ministers, trained up in the arian or socinian schools, have, from whatever cause, lost that skill and fluency and ardour in prayer which characterised their calvinistic progenitors, and have generally discovered an eagerness to receive assistance from a liturgy.

The support of the dissenting ministers continued to be derived from the voluntary contributions of their congregations. These furnished only a moderate salary, not calculated to gratify the cravings of avarice, ambition, or sensuality: but their habits were frugal, their expectations as to worldly things were small, and with strict economy they were enabled to provide food and raiment for their families. The friendship of their hearers, heightened by the view of their zealous and faithful labours, supplied deficiencies, and introduced their children into life with singular advantages; so that it was generally observed, that Providence watched with peculiar tenderness over the families of men who, contented with a very moderate share of temporal benefits, applied the whole strength

of their souls to promote the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men.

By the bequests of pious individuals, benefactions were, from time to time, made to some congregations for the more comfortable support of the minister. Where these did not amount to a sum large enough of itself for a salary, it was of service, especially in small societies where the people were unable to raise a sufficiency among themselves. But wherever the benefaction was large enough for the minister's support, it has been found with but few exceptions to be detrimental to the cause which it was designed to cherish. When the people are considered as cyphers, they act as cyphers; they appear to feel but little concern for the welfare of the society, and have not displayed the same zealous activity and lively interest, as when every thing depended on themselves. So uniform has been the operation of this cause, that where ministers, possessed of opulence, would receive nothing from their hearers as a reward for their labours, it is but seldom that such congregations have been in a flourishing state. A listlessness, and want of public spirit have pervaded the whole mass: so dangerous is it to exclude Christians from the performance of a duty.

These benefactions have proved injurious in another way. When such a fund has fallen into the possession of an unsuitable minister, who, by his sloth, pride, or error, has rendered himself disagreeable to his congregation, they have no means of procuring his removal; and he continues performing his stated services, while the cause of religion is decaying, and his audience dwindling away before his eyes. Whereas, had the minister's support been derived from the people,

necessity would soon have compelled him to depart, and make room for another much better than himself. The great Founder of the Christian church legislated with more than human wisdom for the prosperity and happiness of religious societies, when he framed his constitution in such a manner that the pastor and the flock should mutually depend on each other. This plan he judged to be safest and best for all; and he knew the human heart. Men have thought they could amend the system, and they have rendered the minister independent of the congregation. This independence has appeared delightful to the pride of man, but what has been the consequence? The clergy have acted as lords over God's heritage: and the people have become indifferent about religion.

In order to aid in supplying deficiencies, a fund was instituted, not liable to the same objections as the other. It was provided by the benevolence of the dissenters in London, who, greatly to their honour, made an annual collection for the benefit of poor and small congregations in the country. Two thousand pounds were raised every year in this manner by the presbyterians; and near seventeen hundred pounds by the independents^b. These sums could be distributed so as to give aid to diligence and zeal; and could be withheld from the indolent and undeserving. By benevolent individuals too, donations were fre-

^b Such, according to the London manuscript, was the state of the funds in 1730. The largest collection, among the presbyterians was at Salter's-hall, and amounted to two hundred and eighty pounds. Mr. Bragg's congregation furnished the greatest sum among the independents: three hundred pounds was the amount of their collection.

quently given to be distributed among such ministers as by their devotedness, labours, and poverty should be most deserving of assistance.

Similar exertions were made among the baptists for the support of their cause. In 1717, some of the most zealous in the particular denomination, feeling the importance of making some provision for the necessities of their ministers in the country, exerted themselves to establish a fund for that purpose which gradually increased, and proved exceedingly beneficial to their interest^c. The writer of the London manuscript says, that in 1730, it amounted annually to five hundred pounds. It was composed partly of the interest of sums of money which were given or bequeathed, and partly of collections made every year in their most opulent congregations. A like plan was soon after formed by the general baptists, only with this difference, that the benefit of it was to extend to "all who agreed in the practice of baptism by immersion upon a profession of faith, and appeared to be sober, pious, and faithful in the discharge of

^c The state of the particular baptists at that time is described by them in the following words. "We have observed for some time with great trouble, the little union and correspondence that there is between those of that denomination; the great decay of the interest in some parts of England, and the difficulty they have to keep up the public worship of God with any tolerable reputation in other parts; the great want of able and qualified persons to defend the truth, and to supply those churches which are in want of ministers; the poverty and distress of some, employed in that sacred office, are exposed to, for want of competent maintenance to themselves and families, and the frequent applications which are made to some private persons on these occasions, who have neither ability to help all, nor opportunity to inquire into the circumstances of every particular case." Crosby, vol. IV. p. 199, 200.

their work^d." The amplitude of their fund, however, did not correspond with the liberality in the manner of its disposal: though some gifts and legacies were poured into it, it was but small.

To the generosity of individuals, the dissenters were indebted for an acceptable addition to these general funds. In 1724, a legacy of five thousand pounds was bequeathed to poor ministers by sir John Gayer, to be distributed for their relief. The will of this gentleman, who died on his voyage home from India, expresses, "that he did not leave it to such ministers as were for domination, but for such as were for the pious and charitable principles of the late Rev. Richard Baxter." His lady, who was zealous for the establishment, wished it to be given to the clergy. But two of the executors, knowing that sir John attended the worship of the dissenters, and that when he went to the East Indies, in order to transact some business for the company, he took with him a dissenting minister in disguise, as a chaplain, conceived that they would not be executing the will of the deceased, unless the money was given to the non-conformists. After surmounting various difficulties, the legacy was at last obtained, and distributed among the necessitous dissenting ministers.

Dr. Calamy records, as an event of the following year, another instance of sacred benevolence by Mr. Barnes, a man in a humbler station of life, but whose bequest was more substantial and extensive. He was a hatter in Fleet-street, and having no family, after some legacies to his relations, he bequeathed the

^d Crosby, vol IV. p. 204.

residue of his estate to Mr. Tong, Dr. Calamy, Dr. Wright, and Mr. Bradbury, to be distributed at their discretion, among dissenting ministers, whose necessitous circumstances called for assistance and relief. The sum amounted to twelve thousand pounds, and was disbursed according to the intentions of the testator. Such instances of pious solicitude for the comfort of men, who, amidst the *res angusta domi*, were zealously labouring to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, lay claim to an honourable place in the history of dissenters; and their names deserve to be recorded to posterity in the annals of a religious community, whose best interests they were so desirous to promote.

But divine Providence, on which the dissenting ministers rested for their support, displayed its care in procuring them supplies from a still higher source. King George the first, sensible of their attachment to his family and government, was pleased to give them substantial tokens of his affection and bounty by an annual donation. The motion originated with Mr. Daniel Burgess, secretary to the princess of Wales. Having received his education among the dissenters, gratitude influenced him to endeavour to serve their cause. With this view he mentioned his wishes to lord Townshend, who represented the business to sir Robert Walpole; and these two laid it before his majesty, who was favourable to the measure, and ordered five hundred pounds to be given for the use of the indigent widows of dissenting ministers. The first payment was soon after 1720. In the course of a few years the gift as well as the object was enlarged, and five hundred pounds

were directed to be paid half yearly for assisting ministers too who stood in need of relief, or to be applied to such uses as those entrusted with the distribution should think most conducive to the interests of the dissenting body*. The donation was afterwards increased to two thousand pounds, and continues to be received for the same purposes to the present time.

From these various sources of support the dissenting cause maintained its ground during this period. In instances where it failed, it was less frequently for want of funds, than for want of evangelical truth to stimulate the people to exertions for the preservation of that which to a zealous disciple of Christ, is dearer than life itself.

* When Mr. Burgess received the money, he paid it to Mr. Tong, Mr. Smith, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Clarke, Dr. Evans, Dr. Harris, and Dr. Calamy. It was generally obtained, but sometimes it was forgotten and passed by; for what cause was not known. An equal dividend was made to each minister, and it was distributed as he thought proper; but they generally shewed their accounts to each other, that the same person might not receive assistance from more than one. When any of the ministers died, the survivors named another in his place. A charge was given that secrecy should be observed, but the matter gradually became public.

SECTION III.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND ASSOCIATIONS OF DISSENTERS.

THE ordination service of the dissenters was nearly the same in this, as during the former period; but some shades of difference were introduced, which it will be proper to describe. The practice, which prevailed among the presbyterians, of ordaining several candidates at one time, and at a distance from their charge, was gradually laid aside. Though first in number and influence, they submitted to receive a lesson from the two other denominations, and adopted the custom of ordaining the minister to his charge, in the face of his congregation.

Before the end of this period, there scarcely remained an independent church which entertained an idea of the old method of ordaining a pastor by the members of its own body. How such a practice could ever have been thought of, except in cases of absolute necessity, it is difficult to conceive. There appears a strange incongruity in persons who are to be taught to give a charge to him who is to teach them; and to point out the way in which he is to instruct them^f. In few of the independent churches,

^f The example of a popular ordination in the independent church at Wellingborough, which we gave under the former period, was repeated in 1723, when Mr. Grant was set apart to the pastoral office: but, on his declining the charge, in 1770, their old ideas had become extinct, and Mr. Carver, his successor, was ordained by the ministers of the neighbouring churches in the usual way.

was there a plurality of pastors, or elders to perform the service. To the ministers, therefore, of the neighbouring congregations they had recourse, and by them the person, whom the people elected, was ordained, or set apart to the pastoral charge by prayer, and counsels for the proper discharge of the duties of his office. The imposition of hands was observed by some, and objected to by others; but it gradually came into general use.

The following is an account of the method of ordination, as it was conducted among the more moderate independents during this period. It was drawn up by the pen of Dr. Doddridge, and its insertion will fully explain the manner in which this important service was performed.

“As in the beginning of the charge (to Mr. Abraham Tozer, at Norwich, in 1745), I have touched upon the decent solemnities attending the method of ordination generally used among the protestant dissenters, it may not be improper to give a brief account of them. There is, indeed, a little variety in the usages of different places; but that which I have generally seen, does, I believe, prevail in most of our churches, with the exception, and sometimes no more than the transposition, of a few circumstances.

“It very rarely happens, that a minister among us is admitted to the pastoral office, till he hath spent some years as a kind of candidate for it; and so far as I can recollect, more undertake it after, than before their twenty-sixth year is completed. But as our theological students generally employ either four or five years in preparatory studies, after they have quitted the grammar schools, so they are examined by three or four elder ministers before they begin to

preach. A strict inquiry is made into their character, and into their furniture; both with respect to the learned languages, especially the sacred, and also as to the various parts of natural and moral philosophy, but above all, into their acquaintance with divinity; and some specimen of their abilities, for prayer and preaching is generally expected.

“ When the society, which generally proceeds with entire unanimity in this great affair, has received what it judges competent satisfaction, the several members of it join in giving him a solemn and express call to take upon him the pastoral inspection over them: and if he be disposed to accept it, he generally signifies that intention to neighbouring pastors, whose concurrence he desires in solemnly setting him apart to that office.

“ Previous to the assembly for this sacred purpose, his credentials and testimonials are produced, if it be required by any who are to be concerned; and satisfaction as to his principles is also given to those who are to carry on the public work, generally by his communicating to them the confession of his faith which he has drawn up; in which it is expected, that the great doctrines of Christianity should be touched upon in a proper order, and his persuasion of them plainly and seriously expressed, in such words as he judges most convenient. And we generally think this a proper and happy medium, between the indolence of acquiescing in a general declaration of believing the Christian religion, without declaring what it is apprehended to be, and the severity of demanding a subscription to any set of articles, where if an honest man, who believes all the rest, scruples any one article, phrase, or word,

he is as effectually excluded as if he rejected the whole.

“ The pastors, who are to bear their part in the public work, having been thus in their consciences satisfied, that the person, offering himself to ordination, is duly qualified for the Christian ministry, and regularly called to the full exercise of it, they proceed, at the appointed time and place, to consecrate him to it, and to recommend him to the grace and blessing of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, by fasting and prayer, generally accompanied with the imposition of hands; and the public work of the day is usually, so far as I have been witness, carried on in the following order, or something very near it.

“ It commonly opens with a short prayer, and the reading some select portions of Scripture, which seem most proper to the occasion. Then a prayer is offered of greater length and compass than the former, in which most of our common concerns as Christians are included; which is sometimes, though less frequently, succeeded by another of the same kind. Then follows a sermon, on some suitable subject, such as the institution, importance, difficulty, and excellency of the ministerial work, the character and conduct of the first ministers of the Gospel, or the like.

“ After this introduction of a more general nature, another minister (usually one of the eldest present, who is a kind of moderator for the day,) gives the assembly a more particular account of the occasion of its being convened. The call of the church to the candidate is then recognised, either in word or writing, or by lifting up the hand; and his acceptance is

also declared. He is then desired, for the satisfaction and edification of the assembly, to pronounce his confession of faith (which his brethren have already heard and approved), and pertinent questions are put to him, relating to the views and purposes with which he undertakes the solemn charge, that he may be brought under the most awful engagements to a suitable behaviour in it; and an express renunciation of the errors and superstitions of the Romish church, generally makes a part of these answers, as well as a declaration of his resolution by divine grace, never to forsake the ministry, whatever inconveniences and sufferings it may draw after it.

“This being dispatched, the presiding minister comes down from the pulpit, and prays over the person to be set apart. There is no particular form of prayer on this occasion, or any other among us; but I have observed, that the person who officiates, is generally led in such a circumstance, to adore the divine wisdom and grace, in the constitution and revelation of the Gospel, in the appointment of an evangelical ministry, and in supporting the succession of it throughout all ages of the Christian church, as well as in vindicating it from popish corruption and bondage. Some notice is often taken of what may have seemed most remarkable in providence, with regard to the particular circumstances of the society then to be settled, and the person to be set apart to the ministerial office in it, who is then solemnly offered to the service of God, and recommended to his blessing in all the several parts of his work, which are distinctly enumerated. And this prayer seldom concludes without fervent intercession with God, for the Christian church in general, and all

its faithful ministers of every denomination. And as those rising up to succeed in the work are often mentioned here, so I have had the pleasure frequently to hear the universities of our island, as well as more private seminaries of learned and pious education, affectionately recommended to the divine protection and favour on such occasions, with all the genuine appearances of a truly Christian and catholic spirit. When that part of this prayer begins, which immediately relates to the person then to be consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, it is usual for the speaker to lay his hand on his head, and the other pastors, conveniently within reach (frequently to the number of six, eight, or ten), lay on their hands also, at the same time; by which we do not pretend to convey any spiritual gifts, but only use it as a solemn and expedient, though not absolutely necessary, designation of the person then to be set apart.

“ When this prayer is over (which often engages a very profound attention, and seems to make a very deep impression both on ministers and people), the charge is given to the newly ordained pastor; who generally receives it standing (as much as may be) in the sight of the whole assembly; and an exhortation to the people is sometimes joined with the charge, or sometimes follows it as a distinct service, unless (which is frequently the case) it is superseded by the sermon, or some other previous address. Another prayer follows, and singing having been intermingled, so as properly to diversify a service necessarily so long, the whole is concluded with a solemn benediction.

“ I know no method of proceeding on such occasions, more rational, edifying, and scriptural than this; and I hope, few, who believe any thing of Chris-

tianity, can be so ignorant, or abandoned, as to make light of such solemnities. But, however, any of our fellow-servants may judge, I have a calm, steady, and joyful assurance that transactions like these are registered in heaven with approbation, and receive the sanction and blessing of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls^g."

Among the baptists, little alteration took place in the mode of ordaining their ministers since the former period. An ordination, different from that of the establishment, had scarcely found an entrance either among the calvinistic or arminian methodists.

Associations still continued among the different denominations, but not with the same uniform degree of vigour, as during the former period. The Exeter assembly kept up its accustomed meetings, but without its former unity and energy of principle, and with a gradual decline as the period advanced. Between 1721 and 1730, about ninety ministers attended the assembly. In Lancashire, the pastors of the numerous congregations had regular associations, and for a long time maintained the mildest semblance of presbytery, but they gradually fell into decay. Cumberland and Westmoreland were united in one association. About the middle of the period, a meeting was formed among the congregational churches of Norfolk and Suffolk, who attended in considerable numbers for some years; but the spirit of union decayed by degrees, so that before 1760, it was in danger of being intirely dissolved^h. In Northamptonshire and the neighbouring

^g Doddridge's Tracts, vol. II. p. 253—257.

^h Remarks on the State of Congregational Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, p. 48, 49.

parts an association of ministers subsisted with considerable energy and advantage. The zeal of Doddridge gave life to such meetings, and some of his fellow labourers were men of equal devotedness to their Master's service.

In many parts of England, it is to be lamented that associations were unknown, and ministers had little intercourse with each other in acts of social worship, or consultation for the general good. This charge falls with peculiar weight on a considerable body of the independents, who will now, instead of praise, scarcely find indulgence for the motive which they assigned for their insociability. "It was their earnest wish, they said, to maintain the independency of churches, and guard against every infringement of their rights, from the interference of persons in other congregations, whether ministers or private Christians." Poor casuists they were, who could not distinguish between an authoritative presbytery claiming powers of domination, and a voluntary association of ministers and members of churches, assembling for the enjoyment of social worship, to strengthen each other's hands, to kindle each other's zeal, to advance the cause of the Redeemer in their respective circles, and to extend the ordinances of religion to places where the Gospel was not preached. All these benefits, with the happy consequences resulting from them, were lost by their excessive scrupulosity and unreasonable fears¹.

¹ "Several churches, associating together to hold meetings of their elders and principal brethren, for the purpose of worshipping God together, form an assembly on earth, that bears perhaps the nearest resemblance, we can imagine, of the general assembly above. And meeting together for fraternal conversation afterwards, to pro-

Among the baptists, associations were maintained perhaps with greater vigour, but certainly with greater regularity. But the greatest praise is due to the quakers, whose public and private meetings, for conducting the affairs of the body, although they required the sacrifice of much labour, time, and expence, were attended by the friends with that regularity, perseverance, and interest, which must put every other denomination to the blush.

The dissenters in London still continued to maintain the meetings of the different boards; and they united in all affairs of importance to their common interests. From time to time, they also maintained a respectful intercourse with the government, as they were incited by the calls of interest, gratitude, and duty.

On the accession of George the first, among the friends of civil and religious liberty who offered their congratulations, none appeared with more unfeigned joy and cordial satisfaction, than the dissenters of the metropolis. On the twenty-eighth of September, 1714, the whole body of ministers went to court, with Dr. Daniel Williams at their head, who, in their name, presented to his majesty the following address.

pose their difficulties in order to receive such counsels and other assistances as they may be able to give, must be allowed to be extremely expressive of that tender care for each other, which members of the same body ought to feel. They have accordingly been found by experience to be extremely beneficial, and in some cases, of the utmost consequence." "Such an association would have been extremely encouraged by Dr. Owen, who, in his book 'of the true Nature of a Gospel Church,' p. 25. says, 'churches should be in express readiness to convene on all occasions of common concernment;' and p. 255, 'if churches would meet frequently in synods, &c.'" *Remarks on the State of Norfolk Churches*, p. 48, 50,

“ TO THE KING’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

“ THE HUMBLE ADDRESS OF THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS, OF THE SEVERAL DENOMINATIONS, IN AND ABOUT THE CITY OF LONDON, &c.

“ May it please your majesty.

“ With thankfulness and joy, equal to the great occasion, we congratulate your majesty’s peaceable accession to the throne, and your own and the prince’s safe arrival; the merciful return of many ardent prayers.

“ When we recollect your majesty’s descent from the king and queen of Bohemia, those renowned patrons of the protestant religion, we cannot but adore the divine Providence, which has now rewarded their sufferings for that cause, in their royal offspring with a crown, that renders your majesty the head of the whole protestant interest. But your majesty’s zeal for the same religion, your known affection for the liberties of Europe, and the rights of mankind, with your other celebrated virtues, give us the surest prospect that the blessings of your reign will be as extensive as your power.

“ The parliamentary entail of the crown upon your illustrious house, we have ever esteemed one of the greatest blessings procured for us by our late deliverer king William, of immortal memory. To this happy settlement we have stedfastly adhered against all temptations and dangers. Our zeal herein has been owned to be very conspicuous, by those noble patriots who now surround your throne.

“ We hold no principles, but what do in conscience oblige us to acknowledge your majesty for our

only rightful and lawful sovereign, and do every thing in our power to support your title and government against all pretenders whatsoever.

“Your majesty’s wise and gracious declaration, for which we render our unfeigned thanks, does sensibly relieve us under our present hardships, and gives us ground to hope, that as we are inseparably united in interest and safety, with all that adhere to the succession and monarchy as by law established, so we shall share in that protection and favour, which will make us happy with the rest of your subjects.

“We shall constantly pray for the long life and prosperity of your majesty, for their royal highnesses the prince and princess of Wales, and all the branches of your august family. May that God by whom kings reign, so help you to employ your mighty power and interest, that it may be your majesty’s glory to protect the protestant religion, to suppress the profaneness of the age, to heal the divisions of your people, to assert the right of the injured abroad, and to preserve the balance of Europe.”

To which his majesty returned this gracious answer.

“I am very well pleased with your expressions of duty to me, and you may depend upon having my protection.”

The declaration mentioned in this address, was that which his majesty had made in council, September 22, being the first time of his sitting in it, wherein his majesty expressed himself thus :

“I take this occasion also to express to you my firm purpose, to do all that is in my power, for supporting and maintaining the churches of England and Scotland, as they are severally by law establish-

ed, which, I am of opinion, may be effectually done without the least impairing the toleration, allowed by law to protestant dissenters, so agreeable to Christian charity, and so necessary to the trade and riches of this kingdom."

In the riots and tumults, which were soon after raised in different parts of the country by the high church and tory party, the dissenters were among the greatest sufferers both by personal insults and injuries, and by the destruction of their places of worship. Addresses being presented on the occasion by parliament, and various bodies in the community, the three denominations in London conceived it to be their duty to assure his majesty of their attachment to his person, and family, and loyal subjection to his government. They therefore, on the sixteenth of August, 1715, went to court with the subjoined address, which was presented by Mr. Nathaniel Hodges.

" TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

" We, your majesty's most loyal subjects, think ourselves obliged, in duty and gratitude, humbly to acknowledge that seasonable protection which your majesty has been pleased to give to those of our persuasion, from the late rebellious tumults, and for your gracious answer to your faithful commons, wherein they desire, that a full compensation be made to those, whose sufferings they so justly impute to their zeal and firm adherence to your majesty and to your government. We can assure your majesty, that no just occasion has been given by us to our fellow subjects for any such treatment; nor can the

principles, which oblige us to dissent from the church of England, be a reasonable provocation to any who have the least regard to the common rights of mankind, or the rules of the Christian religion.

“ We desire nothing more, than to enjoy our civil rights, with a just liberty to profess our own religious sentiments, which we take to be a privilege due to all men. We have been always ready to assist the church of England, in defence of the protestant religion, when in real and imminent danger; being agreed with them, and all protestant churches, in those principles that began the reformation, and which alone can justify and support it. When there has been a design to introduce popery and arbitrary power, the protestant dissenters have generally been first attacked. Nor know we any other reason, why we have now suffered the outrage of papists, non-jurors, and other disaffected persons, but that they were sure, we were a body of men, fixed in our duty to your majesty, and lay the most exposed to popular insults, against which your majesty, and your two houses of parliament, in your great wisdom and goodness, have given us a seasonable, and, we hope, effectual security for the time to come.

“ Whilst your majesty’s government is disturbed at home, and threatened with an invasion from abroad, we can answer for those of our persuasion, that there are not any of them, whose principles and inclinations will not influence them to assist and support your majesty and the protestant religion to the utmost of their power. We look upon ourselves bound, by the strongest ties of duty, gratitude, and interest, to acknowledge and maintain your majesty’s undoubted right and title to the imperial crown of

these realms, and to declare our utmost abhorrence of all attempts, either at home or abroad, in favour of a popish pretender. May that gracious Providence, which has so signally appeared in bringing your majesty to the throne of these kingdoms, continue to protect and defend your royal person and family against all attempts of your open and secret enemies."

His majesty returned this most gracious answer.

"I am very much concerned at the unchristian and barbarous treatment, which those of your persuasion have met with in several parts of my kingdom, and care shall be taken, that a full compensation be made to them for their sufferings. I thank you for this address, and you may be assured of my protection."

After an end had been put to the internal disturbances, and to the rebellion in Scotland, and quiet had been restored, the dissenters again, on the fourth of March, 1717, went to court, with Dr. Calamy at their head, who in their name presented the following address.

"TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

"THE HUMBLE ADDRESS OF THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS, OF THE SEVERAL DENOMINATIONS, IN AND ABOUT THE CITIES OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER.

"May it please your majesty.

"Though we are very ambitious of professing the allegiance and duty we owe to your majesty on every occasion; yet we never make these professions with greater readiness and alacrity, than when your majesty's government is unhappily threatened with any

disturbance at home, or from abroad: such occasions giving us the best opportunity to express that zeal and fidelity, by which we are always desirous to be distinguished. As we offered up constant prayers to almighty God for the safety of your majesty's person, while you was abroad, and have since sent up our humble thanks, for your majesty's safe return to these your dominions; so we reckon it our great felicity, among the rest of your faithful subjects, that your majesty is in this your kingdom, before a rebellion, concerted between a restless faction and some foreign ministers, was to break out.

"We congratulate your majesty, with all humility, on the success of your councils abroad, which tends to secure your person and government from the malicious designs of your enemies; and that, as your majesty, upon visiting your hereditary countries, saw some branches of your royal family in health, so, upon your return from them, you found your kingdoms in peace and tranquillity, by the prudent administration of his royal highness the prince of Wales; and her royal highness the princess recovered from a danger which gave all your majesty's good subjects the utmost anxiety and concern.

"We take the liberty to return your majesty our most dutiful thanks, for those privileges which we enjoy in common with the rest of your subjects under your government, by which the honour, commerce, and credit of this nation, are so far retrieved and improved, and its security so much advanced; and also for the steps which your majesty has been pleased to take towards repairing the damages, which several of our persuasion suffered by the late rebellious tumults, pursuant to the address of the honourable

house of commons, and your majesty's most gracious answer.

“ We unfeignedly wish your majesty, as entire a possession of the hearts of all those of your subjects, that have been so unjustly and violently set against you, as your majesty has of the affections of all of our persuasion throughout your dominions. Among us we know not, that you have an open, a secret, or a suspected enemy, nor any who, notwithstanding what they have suffered from your majesty's enemies, or the neglect they have hitherto met with from others (for whose sakes, and with whom they have been always content to suffer), can be brought to the least degree of indifference about any thing that concerns your majesty, your family, or your administration. We reckon it our peculiar glory, that during the late unnatural rebellion, there was not any of our principles, who did not express the utmost zeal for the suppressing of it, in their several stations and capacities.

“ Your majesty's penetration will, we doubt not, easily lead you to discern, that such a body of your faithful subjects deserve to be distinguished in another manner, than by marks of infamy. Their consolation is, that they were put under some of them, for what was hoped, at that time, would have been for your service: had your majesty, and the nation found it so, we had been the more easy. We think it the particular honour of the protestant dissenters, that their strict adherence to the interest of your illustrious family, before your majesty's accession, and their loyalty to it since, have drawn upon them so much of the fury of some of their fellow subjects. We are not conscious what else could render us obnoxious to

them, our principles being, as we hope, the most friendly to mankind, and amounting to no more than those of a general toleration to all peaceable subjects, universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light into his will about them.

“We do not so much as expect or desire any thing, that ought to give any one the least disturbance; we only wish, that under your majesty as the common father of all your loyal people, those of our persuasion might not want a capacity, as we hope your majesty will find, they never want an inclination to promote the true interest of the protestant religion, and of their country.

“May the great God continue to multiply his blessings upon your majesty, and every branch of your royal family; and after you have many years ruled faithfully for God on earth, may you reign gloriously with him for ever in heaven.”

His majesty's answer was in the following words.

“I thank you for your dutiful and affectionate address. I am fully convinced of the loyalty and zeal of the protestant dissenters. I will give order for the speedy payment of the damages they have sustained in the late tumults; and they and you shall always have my protection.”

While the death of George the first caused sincere regret in all the friends of both political and religious liberty, the exaltation of his son to the peaceable possession of the throne gave the highest satisfaction: and none felt more than the dissenters, who had enjoyed so much tranquillity under the former reign, and expected a continuance of it under his son. On

the fourth of July, 1727, about a hundred of the dissenting ministers in and around London, attended Dr. John Evans to court, who, in the name of the three denominations, presented the following address.

“ ADDRESS OF DISSENTERS ON THE ACCESSION OF
GEORGE THE SECOND.

“ May it please your majesty,

“ Whilst your majesty's royal declaration so tenderly mentions the sudden and unexpected death of your dearest father, all loyal subjects, as becomes their different stations, are mourning the loss of one common father to his people. The protestant dissenting ministers can never forget his paternal favours and condescensions; and we beg your majesty will give us leave on this great occasion to speak our affecting sense of that awful providence, which has finished a reign so important and gracious as that of king George the first. By this mighty stroke, the world is bereaved of one of the wisest and best of princes, and the reformed religion of its chief glory and defence. But the immediate and peaceful succession of George the second, dries up our tears. A protestant heir thus coming to the throne of his father, is a new blessing to Britain. A prince who gave the world so early proof of his spirit and courage in the field, who hath shewn so much goodness since his abode in this kingdom, and given us such agreeable presages of happiness upon his wearing the imperial crown of these realms. This consideration, together with that of a queen consort, entirely protestant and universally beloved, fills our hearts with joy, that greatly and justly exceeds all our sorrow. By this means, the reformed

religion gains fresh support and glory ; and all transactions, for the peace and settlement of Europe, proceed with renewed life and vigour. Thus, when it pleased Almighty God (by whom kings reign) to inspire your glorious predecessor, king William, to lay the foundation of the protestant succession, in the illustrious and numerous family of Brunswick, he provided both an effectual relief of our present sorrows, and a lasting guard against future dangers.

“ We rejoice in the wise conduct, and those kind disposals of Providence, which have tied up the hands of the declared enemies to your august house, so that they have it not in their power at present, by any means, to disturb either your majesty’s proceedings, or our joy. This is such a confirmation of the kingdoms in your majesty’s illustrious family, as we trust will for ever extinguish their hopes who have hitherto vainly struggled for a popish pretender.

“ On our parts, we can assure your majesty of hearts full of loyalty and affection to your person and government, and so far as belongs to our stations and characters, we shall not fail both to teach the duties owing to crowned heads, and practise them ourselves upon every occasion. It is with pleasure, we can further assure your majesty, that the protestant dissenters, we believe to a man, are in the same loyal sentiments. And we doubt not our continued share in those liberties which your majesty hath graciously declared are most dear to you.

“ We rely upon your princely wisdom and care to do every thing that may strengthen and unite sincere Christians and protestants ; and heartily wish our suffering brethren abroad the same blessings with ourselves.

“ We shall not cease to offer up unfeigned and ardent prayers to Almighty God, that your majesty may long live the defender of our religion, laws, and liberties, and the succourer of the distressed ; that you may be prospered in perfecting the great work now depending beyond the seas, that decaying piety may revive throughout your own dominions, and an universal probity of manners may be promoted ; that with your royal consort, you may reign in the hearts of all your subjects, and in your royal issue, may reign from one generation to another ; and that all manner of blessings may be multiplied on the house, person, and administration of your sacred majesty.”

To which address his majesty was pleased to return the following most gracious answer.

“ I thank you for this loyal and affectionate address. You may be assured of my protection, and of my care and attention to support the protestant interest.”

They were all of them afterwards introduced to the queen, and at the common request of the whole body, Dr. Calamy made a speech to her majesty in the following words.

“ May it please your majesty,

“ We cheerfully embrace the opportunity that presents, of expressing our duty to your majesty, encouraged by that conjunction of goodness with greatness, and that commanding air of life and sweetness, that animate all who have the honour to approach you.

“ We sincerely congratulate your ascending the throne, which we hope will prove easy, being adorned with those noble virtues, and particularly with that benevolence to mankind, which are so conspicuous in your majesty. When a regard to religion could prevail with a princess of your high birth, even in the

earliest part of life, to slight the prospect of a crown, which had visible danger to conscience attending it; that kind heaven at length should reach you forth another, as remarkable for its safety as its glory, is such a return of divine providence, as we cannot but admire with great thankfulness, though without the least surprise, since he, whose kingdom ruleth over all, has fixed it as a standing measure of his government, that such as honour him he will honour."

"May your majesty's happiness be lasting, and your name always carry a delightful sound to every British ear. May both your majesties have an early accession of new glories and comforts: may your royal offspring, educated with so much care, and from whom we have such raised expectations; prove eminent blessings to the reformed churches both at home and abroad; and may an infinitely nobler crown, than this earth can afford, and that will never be laid down, be added hereafter by the same almighty hand, by which your majesty has been so remarkably distinguished hitherto.

"These, madam, are and will be the ardent prayers of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS; who, having nothing more at heart than the continuance and advancement of piety, truth, and love, loyalty, liberty, and property, promise themselves your majesty's countenance and protection."

To the dissenters in Wales, during this period, superior praise is due, for that which is so honourable in the character of a Christian—zeal in propagating those principles which they conceived to be of importance to the happiness of man. They who display none, either must think their principles not

Necessary to human happiness, or that they have little distinguishing goodness to entitle them to pre-eminence. If they are both excellent and necessary, then it will scarcely be allowed that they believe them to be true. From such an accusation the zeal of the Welch dissenters completely shelters them.

In the beginning of this period, there were only forty-three congregations in the whole principality: at its conclusion, they amounted to a hundred and fifty. To this increase, the ardent labours of their ministers, and the additional supplies furnished by the seminaries, contributed in an eminent degree among the pædobaptists, while the baptists appear to have advanced with equal steps. Some of the zealous ministers, in their attempts to diffuse the truth through every part of their country, suffered much persecution from some of the rugged inhabitants, especially of North Wales. Arianism penetrated among the Cambrian mountains, but meeting a less cordial reception than in England except from a few, less retarded the progress of that cause which was founded on evangelical principles, and which has prospered or decayed as these have been embraced or abandoned.

CHAP. VII.

STATE OF RELIGION AMONG THE DISSENTERS.

TO the ecclesiastical historian, few scenes will afford greater pleasure than a view of the spiritual condition of the first generation in the dissenting churches. We now descend from the fathers to the children, from those who were trained up amidst the alarms and bitterness of persecution, to those who spent all their days in tranquillity.

Seldom has the church of God seen two successive generations eminent for piety and zeal. The Israelites, who left Egypt in their early years, and after being instructed by God in the wilderness, took possession of the promised land, appear to have been distinguished for their attachment to the ordinances of God and fidelity in his service: but their children turned away from the divine institutions, and followed after the idols of the heathen. Those who were called by the ministry of the apostles both from among the Jews and the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, exhibit superior purity in principle, sanctity of life, and patience in suffering; but their immediate successors declined greatly from the faith and holiness of the Gospel. The age of the reformation produced an abundant harvest of believers, whose lives exhibited the powerful influence of the truth, and who were willing to suffer the loss of all things in its defence. But the succeeding generation in general lost that spirit of ardour for the propagation of the Gospel,

which their fathers had so eminently displayed. For fifty years after the rise of nonconformity, few Christian communities have been able to boast of a greater number of excellent ministers and exemplary disciples in private life. What the religious state of their successors was during the second period of this history, will now be seen.

A general uniformity of sentiments had hitherto prevailed, but a diversity now began to appear. For the sake of precision, therefore, it becomes necessary to consider the state of each denomination separately, in order to ascertain its spiritual condition.

The presbyterians differed widely among themselves. By some, the old puritanical system was retained, and in their sermons they brought forward the doctrines of the Gospel in the most prominent manner. Others, though professing the same creed, did not so frequently introduce them, nor so fully enter into them. When they preached on any evangelical topic, they did it with propriety, and shewed that they were sound in the faith. But the ordinary strain of their preaching was more on general principles of religion ; and they spent much of their time in explaining and enforcing the precepts of Christianity. The habitual display of the vital truths of the Gospel, for which the nonconformists were distinguished, was thrown aside. The generous wine is so dashed with water as to render the beverage vapid, unpleasant, and not nutritive. A third division of the orthodox was remarkable for the unexampled coldness of their sermons, and dulness of their delivery.

Some of their ministers allowed that they receded

a little from the original principles, and took to themselves the name of baxterians. Among them were some excellent men, whose labours were very useful: but the greater part, instead of resembling Richard Baxter in his ideas and manner of preaching, were only remarkable for almost omitting the peculiarities of the Gospel. This was also the distinguishing feature of those who called themselves arminians. The parts of Christianity, which are most allied to natural religion, seemed to please them best; and it is but seldom that they are found entering with affection and zeal into those evangelical doctrines which they professed to believe^k.

Arianism, which was gradually extending its circle, furnished two classes of preachers. The first concealed their sentiments under ambiguous expressions, which their orthodox hearers might turn to the support of their own system, and the arian converts might interpret in their favour. Many wore this disguise all their days, and the most cautious carried the secret with them to the grave. Some, when they had slipped out of the world, certain that

^k Heresy did not spread at first so rapidly among the presbyterians ministers in the metropolis as in the country. The writer of the London manuscript specifies the sentiments of all the dissenting ministers in London, about the year 1730. The presbyterians, he classes thus:—nineteen calvinists, thirteen arminians, and twelve baxterians. All the independents, he says, were calvinists; twenty-seven thoroughly, and one somewhat dubious; three inclined to antinomianism, and two, who were disorderly, did not deserve any particular remark. Of the two seventh-day baptist ministers, one was a calvinist, the other an arminian. Of the sixteen particular baptists, seven were calvinists, and nine inclined to the antinomian strain. Five of the eight general baptists were arminians, and three socinians.

their bones would not like Wickliffe's be torn from the tomb, and treated with indignity, left behind them a discourse or pamphlet which contained their real sentiments. Others had revealed the mystery to the initiated few, who, after the death of the teacher, told the tale of his heresy to the world. To express with due severity the odiousness of this procedure is impossible.

The second class, though less numerous, was more honest: they boldly preached the arian doctrine to their congregations. Socinianism was the child of arianism; and it was not till the mother was come to maturity, that the infant was brought into the world. Some socinians appeared before this period closed, but they concealed their convictions: not above two or three were frank and upright men, who told the people all their little faith.

The transition from orthodoxy to these descending systems, is a phenomenon which has a claim to notice. Some of the ministers appear to have taken Alvarado's leap, and reached arianism at once. The alteration of their sentiments as to the person of Christ, speedily produced a change in all the rest. But generally it was by slower and more numerous steps. The deficiency of evangelical principles in some, and the coldness with which they came from the lips of others, seem to have prepared the way for the relinquishment of them, and for the introduction first of arminianism, and then of arianism. Exeter; that devoted city, unhappily furnishes an example of the mournful process. In 1749, Micaiah Towgood, an arian, was chosen a minister of the united congregations. Mr. Stephen Towgood and Mr. Walrond the surviving pastors, both reputed orthodox, and

who preached orthodox doctrine, received him with cordiality ; and in compliance with his wishes, ceased to require a declaration of faith in the divinity of Christ, which had, till that time, been demanded of all who were admitted to the Lord's supper. Harmony subsisted among them, and they continued to labour together in peace¹. Another instance no less remarkable occurred in London. Dr. William Harris, an avowed calvinist, and who always preached according to that system, during the last twenty years of his ministry, was assisted by Dr. Lardner, a quiet socinian, as afternoon preacher ; and at his decease, the congregation, on Dr. Lardner's refusal, chose Dr. Benson, a socinian too, as his successor in the pastoral office. What the strain of Dr Harris's preaching was, that the people or he could bear with a socinian preacher on the other service of the day ; what the hearts and minds of the congregation were composed of which could thus blend together calvinism and socinianism ; and after forty years labours of a calvinist, could welcome a socinian pastor, are certainly questions of painful curiosity. Scores of presbyterian congregations thus admitted heretical assistants to their orthodox pastors, and heretical successors too. Before the close of this period, in most of their principal congregations, it became the order of the day.

For so mournful a change various reasons may be assigned. The controversy in the former period respecting the works of Dr. Crisp, is said to have proved injurious to the presbyterian interest. The evils of the antinomian system Dr. Williams, one of their body, had exposed with great clearness and force. His pieces were much read by the young

¹ Manning's Life of M. Towgood

ministers of that denomination; and inspired them with horror for every thing which had the name of antinomianism, and produced a determination to keep at as great a distance from it as possible. In their fear and flight they unwisely cast away a part of the truth. The doctrine of grace had been abused to licentiousness, and they kept it out of the people's sight: the righteousness of Christ had been perverted to a contempt of sanctity in heart and life; and instead of glorying in the truth, and enlarging on it with all the ardour of the most cordial delight, they either omitted it altogether, or only introduced it to shew how much it might be abused. Through the unhappy influence of such sentiments, they gradually receded from the truth, and many of the presbyterian ministers departed from the evangelical doctrines into high arminianism, and arianism, and some at last into socinianism.

To the nature of the discipline which the presbyterians adopted, a part of the evil may be ascribed. Episcopacy permits every one to kneel at the altar who can say his catechism, and has been confirmed. Presbytery requires a knowledge of the principles of religion and a regular life: beyond these it has never professed to go; and the whole decision was left to the minister. As the natural result of the system, the children followed their parents to the Lord's table: and a presbyterian congregation was a society wherein the rising generation took the place of the preceding, in a succession of the same families. Though the fathers and mothers were pious, it frequently happened that the children were not, yet they occupied their place; and such as were in respectable situations had considerable influence in the

choice of the minister. To a person who makes a profession of religion, but is destitute of its power, some kind of appearance is requisite. Controversy answers the purpose, and comes in opportunely to the person's aid. It was now carried on in all its ardour; and as the new opinions had some things to recommend them to such persons, they were readily received. Differing from the common creed, they conferred on the proselyte a superior degree of sagacity and liberality: and the scheme of practical religion which they taught, required a smaller degree of self-denial than the orthodox system, and gave greater indulgences in conformity to the world.

In the state of their seminaries may be found another cause of presbyterian heresy. The fears of persecution having vanished, and the fierceness of high-church bigotry abated, the office of a minister was respectable in the eyes of dissenters: though not lucrative, it was coveted by many; and good parents often wished to see a promising son a preacher of the Gospel. From his father's house he went to the seminary a well-instructed and well-behaved young man: no decided religion appeared in him, and it was not required. In some of the seminaries controversy was too much in vogue. Those who adopted the new opinions, were eager to make converts. Such students too readily imbibed the poison, and came forth into the ministry, either concealing the face of error under the veil of truth, or openly avowing the arian or socinian system. In the life of Dr. Priestley such a seminary is described with his own pen. Towards the close of this period he studied under Dr. Ashworth, the successor of Dr. Doddridge. The tutor was orthodox: his assistant, Mr. Clark, was

an arian: the students were almost equally ranged under these two heads: and one of their great employments consisted in agitating the controversy, and contending in favour of their different systems. To those who know the human heart, and that to a youth who is not of decided piety, arianism has charms above calvinism, and is more indulgent to the propensities of human nature, it will excite no surprise that many of the young men should embrace with zeal the arian creed. Hence the presbyterian churches were filled with erroneous ministers.

In connection with the seminaries, the state of the presbyterian churches was considerably injured, by what was in itself laudable—a spirit of free inquiry. That in every individual, religion must be the result of examination and the exercise of judgment, is one of those self-evident truths which to attempt to demonstrate would be folly. From the ideas of dissenters, who consider this as a fundamental article of their code, they may be allowed to set a high value upon it: but they ran into an extreme, and mistook its place; for instead of viewing it as a means, they made it an end. Free inquiry became an idol, which they bowed down to worship. Among the most ardent of her devotees were the students in their seminaries, who seemed to think no sacrifice so acceptable as that of an old creed in order to the adoption of a new one. It would thus be evident to all, that they had exercised the rights of free inquiry, and examined and judged for themselves. When they afterwards appeared in the pulpit, it was their ambition and delight to recommend free inquiry to the congregation; and where they durst, to detail the communications which they had received from her

lips. The most liberal youths in the society, and some too of maturer age, caught the flame, and by embracing the arian system were anxious to share the gifts she had conferred upon them. The itch for novelty spread far and wide ; so that, instead of the sober exercise of freedom of judgment in divine things, the object presented to the view of impartial observers was—religious liberty run mad.

The misapplication of the word candour was more injurious in its effects on religious sentiments, than can now be well conceived. It was supposed to possess indescribable virtues. Candour was sounded from many a pulpit ; and like charity, it was supposed to hide a multitude of sins. An orthodox minister who had candour, was to believe that an arian or socinian was a very good man ; and that if he was sincere in his opinions, and not rigid in condemning others, he ought not to be condemned himself. The influence of this idea was exceedingly pernicious ; for it led to an indifference with respect to truth and error, which depraved both their sentiments and dispositions, which relaxed the springs of Christian integrity and conduct, and gradually brought them to call good evil and evil good, to put light for darkness and darkness for light. This was another of the arian idols. Dr. Doddridge, whose softness of temper led him to more intercourse with ministers of the new opinions than most of his brethren, was sensible of the blindness of this boasted candour, and frequently mentions, with considerable feeling, that its possessors could exercise it to all but those who were the ardent believers of evangelical doctrine^m.

^m Dr. Jennings having reason to believe that two of his students

The cause of religion among the presbyterians also sustained an injury from the intercourse between the orthodox and erroneous, in acts of ministerial communion. At the beginning of this period, they were all so much united in sentiments, that they could with pleasure officiate for each other. But arianism introduced a new state of things. Where it was avowed by a minister, a separation usually took place between his congregation, and those which continued in their former sentiments. But as in most instances the new opinions were gradually imbibed, and cautiously concealed, the bonds of former friendship were not broken; and between such men and the orthodox, intercourse in acts of worship remained. If it should be pleaded, that, by this means, the erroneous ministers were put upon their guard, and kept from an open avowal of heresy, and that their congregations had an opportunity of hearing evangelical ministers, it must be admitted on the other hand, that it was an unnatural union, and that it tended to make arians think more favourably of themselves and their system, when they were thus acknowledged to be ministers of Christ's Gospel. It was a temptation too to the orthodox, not to bring forward evangelical doctrines so fully, when they were preaching to congregations which in general did not approve them. This charge used

were tainted with heresy, objected to their continuance in his academy, and they were obliged to leave it; but the doctor's conduct is severely reprobated on this account, and he is charged with being destitute of candour, and an enemy to free inquiry. *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, vol. V. Is he not entitled to a high degree of praise for refusing to bid God speed, or to countenance persons who, instead of carrying to a congregation the pure Christian doctrine, and feeding them with the bread of life, would have preached destructive errors, and poisoned their souls.

to be adduced against Dr. Doddridge, when he was invited to preach in some of the less orthodox congregations in London and the great country towns.

Such were the causes of the injurious change which took place in a large portion of the presbyterian congregations: it remains briefly to specify the state of religion under the variety of sentiments which prevailed among them. Where the doctrine of the puritans was fully and faithfully preached, the people felt its influence; believers were edified, and sinners converted to God. Where the preaching, though pure, was dull and cold, the effect was lessened; coldness seized the people's hearts. Where evangelical truth was scantily brought forward, and but thinly spread over the discourse, which unhappily was the case with too many who professed the orthodox doctrine, its effects were still feebler, and there was less power accompanying the word; and in proportion as they receded from the pure Gospel, all beneficial influence decayed.

In those congregations where arianism was preached, whether in a negative or positive way, the effects were such as might naturally be expected to flow from so great an error. Those men, who first embraced it, as well as their adherents, boldly demanded; "what evil can possibly arise from having different ideas about a mere speculative opinion?" They were not aware that it changed the whole system, and insinuated its spirit not only into the branches but into the root. When the Saviour is reduced from an equality with God to the condition of a creature, he is infinitely less powerful and compassionate. Hence as man has not so glorious a

Saviour, his case is not so deplorable as the orthodox represent it to be; his guilt is neither so aggravated, nor his depravity so great. An atonement made by a creature will suffice for his forgiveness; and the grace of a creature, for such the Holy Ghost is said to be, will render him all the assistance of which he stands in need. The mercy of God in redemption is not so transcendent as the calvinists believe; nor the love of Christ in his humiliation and death so exceedingly wonderful.

From the influence of these ideas, the soul of the arian preacher undergoes an amazing change. He has lower views of the Gospel in all its parts; his heart does not now dwell on it with delight; he takes refuge in other subjects, and, like Mr. Pierce, preaches practical discourses. But these practical discourses are not, like the morals of the Gospel, founded on its doctrines, and forming a compact system which commences with the regeneration of the sinner, and derives all its life from the influences of the Holy Spirit. He resembles more a follower of Epictetus, and treats of duties in an abstract philosophical form. The same effects are produced in the people's minds; like their preacher, they lose a relish for the pure simplicity of the Gospel, and the effect of its principles is not felt.

Though among those who maintained the doctrine of the Trinity, there were different ideas as to the personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, from mens wishing to be wise above what is written, it does not appear that these differences produced any material effect as to the efficacy of their preaching. The divinity of the Saviour was a firm foundation for the Christian doctrine to rest upon. But whenever

the divinity of Christ was denied, and he was reduced to the rank of a creature, its benumbing influence was immediately perceived, the doctrine lost its power, and the rest of the system felt the change.

At first there was more religion in the congregations where arianism was negatively preached, than those who consider only that system would be led to expect; but it was owing to the influence of the orthodox doctrine to which the people had formerly listened; and it was maintained by the private exercises of devotion, and by the perusal of the writings of the most eminent nonconformist divines. Though starved in the public ordinances by the meagre discourses of the arian preachers, they were feasted in their closets by the volumes of Baxter, Owen, Flavel, Charnock, and Howe. But these Christians were gradually removed by death; and then the influence of arianism appeared. The religious principles of those who remained, being less powerful, had a weaker hold of their mind. The exercises of secret devotion which were the delight of their fathers, though not neglected by them, did not produce the same degree of pleasure. Those books, which were considered as the classics of the puritans in the closet, gave place to others less spiritual and evangelical, but more congenial to their taste. These increased the languor, rendered the closet less agreeable, and their visits to it either shorter, or more infrequent. The stimulus to every duty, formerly communicated by the ardour of public worship, ceased to be felt. Family worship now began to be offered but once a day; by many it was afterwards confined to the Sabbath; and with some, it fell intirely into disuse. The former strictness in the observance of the Lord's-day was broken

in upon by many things which their fathers had taught them to be works neither of necessity nor mercy. The domestic regulations, which had formerly been regarded as the characteristics of a dissenting household, were gradually thrown aside. The younger people in respectable families, if not the parents, learned to play at cards when they visited in the houses of the rich and gay, who now became their companions, because they moved in an equal station in society with themselves. When they were visited in their turn, they pleaded hard with the old people and too often prevailed, to be allowed to entertain their guests in the same way. By these fashionable friends, they were introduced to assemblies and balls; and to crown all, they at length entered the doors of the theatre, and learned to frequent dramatic entertainments, like other genteel people of the same rank.

While under the influence of arianism, some were thus running headlong into the ways of the world which lieth in wickedness, other were as unprofitably occupied in speculating about religion. Novelty was their study and delight. To turn aside a text from its natural meaning, in order to favour arianism or socinianism, was a mighty achievement. As this could not, in many instances, be done with a tolerably good grace; and as many passages in the apostolical writings resisted the efforts of their utmost ingenuity, they had the sagacity to discover that the epistles ought not to be considered as having the same degree of authority with the Gospels^a. They scarcely in the

^a I never knew a man make distinction between the gospels and epistles but the reason was apparent. He was a socinian, and finding little about the sacrifice and atonement of Christ in the

course of this period, arrived at the perfection in this art which has been since attained, to reject chapters, paragraphs, and verses even in the Gospels, when they threaten to destroy a favourite system. Others of this class directed their attention to forms of prayer, and bid adieu to the extemporary devotions of their fathers. Where a liturgy forms part of the institutions of an establishment, no inference can be drawn from the use of it, as to the state of religion in that church. But when those, who have long displayed a preference for extemporary prayer, grow weary of it, and adopt forms, especially such as those of the Liverpool liturgy; the person, who attributes this to a decay of vital piety, to indolence of mind and coldness of heart, will not have fixed his arrow far from the centre of the mark.

But it may be said, is no exception to be made in favour of congregations in which religion flourished? An arian congregation, under an arian minister, where religion was in a flourishing state, perhaps cannot be named in the whole of England, since the day that James Pierce preached that doctrine within the walls of his new meeting at Exeter. Religion may be said to flourish where the members of the society display its influence in sanctity of life, in spirituality of conversation, and delight in the ordinances of worship: where the rising generation ap-

the evangelists (as there could not be much before our Lord's death), and finding the doctrine run through every page of all the epistles, he was willing to sink the character of the epistles, and lessen mens ideas of them in order to support his favourite notions. We are to take our ideas of Christianity, not from one part of the New Testament, but the whole of it: every part has equal authority. Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers, vol. 1. p. 136, 137.

pears impressed with the importance of eternal things, and regards the happiness of heaven as the highest object of pursuit : and where from time to time, the careless and profane, awakened by the preaching of the Gospel to a concern for the salvation of the soul; eagerly inquire, " what must I do to be saved." In such a congregation, the true ends of its institution are answered ; and among the evangelical dissenters hundreds of examples are to be found. But can the arians point out such an one in their connection, or memory record an instance since the doctrine found admission into the pulpits of the nonconformists ? In short, as arianism was the grave of the presbyterian congregations ; as soon as it ever entered the pulpit, it might immediately be written on the wall, " Ichabod, the glory is departed."

Among the independents, the state of religion was so much more favourable, that it may justly excite in every reader a desire to know whence the difference did proceed. Instead of the diversity of sentiments which prevailed among the presbyterians, the religious principles of the nonconformists were maintained by the independents in all their purity : it may be questioned whether an arian, or even an arminian was to be found in the whole body. There was no denomination in England which could boast of so much unanimity as to doctrine*.

* I see no necessary connection between calvinistical sentiments and zealous useful labours, but I have long observed with great surprise that our orthodox brethren in the church, and among the dissenters, are in general most serious and active in their ministry : and those of freer principles more indolent and languid. I have met with few exceptions in the compass of my acquaintance. I do

Of their orthodoxy, their system of church government may be justly assigned as one powerful cause. An independent church is, in its very nature, a society of converts. Descent is out of the question. None are admitted into communion but such as can give satisfactory evidence that they have believed in Christ, and repented of their sins, and walk as becometh the Gospel. By the church, which is composed of such persons, all affairs are managed, and no new member can be admitted without their approbation. When a pastor is to be chosen, an act the most important of all towards the advancement of religion, the power resides in the church, and in the church alone. Plain John, Thomas, and Andrew, Sarah, Margaret, and Mary have their vote equally with the highest and most opulent in the society. Much contempt has been thrown on this method of procedure; but to it the independents owe the continuance of the Gospel among them in its purity from generation to generation. Whether, from the year in which non-conformity began, an episcopal or presbyterian congregation can be found in England, in which there has been to the present day, a constant succession of ministers who have preached the Gospel (and let the doctrinal articles of the church of England be the standard), may be at least a matter of doubt; perhaps there is a certainty that it has not. But, in independent churches, examples without number can be produced;

deliberately think that the more persons enter into the peculiarities of the Gospel, and the more regard they pay to the sacrifice of Christ and the influences of the spirit, the more their own piety will increase, and the more zealous they will be to do good to the souls of others. And I think it not difficult to account for this. Orton's *Letters to Dissenting Ministers*, vol. I. p. 90.

may, but few can be mentioned in which it has not been preached in continued succession, from the beginning of the dissent to the present hour. With not a few, it has been common to make the independent mode of church government the subject of ridicule, and to exult in its numerous inconveniences. While human beings have their imperfections, the influence of these will operate to its disadvantage; but a system, which has secured the highest benefits, and preserved the purity of the Gospel, where episcopacy and presbytery fail, is intitled to the esteem of the wise, and the approbation of the good.

Another means of preserving purity of doctrine among the independents was, the regulation of their seminaries. In whatever relates to the instruction of persons for the ministry, there is nothing of equal importance with the character of the person taught. But to this, how little attention has been paid. The universities unfolded their gates to every youth who had learning sufficient to serve as a foundation for future pursuits: and the highest offices and dignities of the church were open to him, provided he had influence to procure them. Decency of conduct, freedom from vices, and some appearances of seriousness were necessary to obtain admission into the presbyterian seminaries. But, in the course of this period, the principle was recognised and acted upon, that no persons should be admitted into the academical institution of the independents, but such as displayed a decision of character, and gave satisfactory and credible evidence that they were born of the Spirit, and that Christ was formed in their hearts the hope of glory.

Some young men, chiefly the sons of ministers and eminent private Christians, after passing through a course of education for the ministry, being found not to preach the Gospel with that ability, fulness, and zeal which the people desired, complaint was made to Dr. Ridgley, the tutor. On an investigation of the subject, a few good men formed themselves into a society for encouraging the education of young persons for the ministry; and they laid it down as a fundamental maxim, that none should be admitted but such as to good natural abilities, added soundness in the faith, and the character of a decided Christian. Such was the origin of the King's-head society, composed of private Christians only, from the independent churches, and such was their object. It is to be regretted, that their names have not been handed down, that they might receive that ample tribute of homage, which is justly due to such distinguished worth.

The man, who first exhibits and brings forth into action a general principle of truth or goodness, is to be ranked among the benefactors of the human race; and every such occurrence deserves to be marked as an æra in the chronological chart recording successive discoveries for the advancement of wisdom and happiness in the world. Here the general principle was, "that a person ought to be a Christian before he was admitted to be a student in divinity." Its plainness may be supposed by some to detract from the merit of those who adopted and exhibited it: but all general principles, when exhibited, are plain; and carry their evidence with them. Plain, however, as this principle is, it will not be found in the voluminous pages of ecclesiastical history, that it was ever acted upon in any age, or in any part of the Christian

church, till the King's-head society made it the ground-work of their plan. It was immediately adopted in that seminary, and the result has fully justified the wisdom of the measure; for it has sent forth a greater number of ministers sound in the faith, exemplary in their conduct, and zealous and successful in their labours, than any other in England. The principle has now so fully approved itself to the judgment of wise and good men, that the same regulations are adopted by almost every seminary among the evangelical dissenters; and the churches are reaping extensive and durable benefits from them. It may be considered as the counterpart of their church government in admitting none but converted persons into communion. No method has yet been discovered which tends so effectually to secure and to perpetuate a holy, faithful, zealous, and successful ministry.

From the other evils which desolated the presbyterian congregations, the independents were in a great measure free. The rage for free inquiry, which was supposed not to be exercised unless the person adopted new opinions, was happily unknown. Being beyond the charities of candour, and generally considered as a sect excluded from her embraces, she was an utter stranger to them, and they had no intercourse with her. In general too, they refused to hold any ministerial or Christian communion with such as they suspected to have erred from the faith, and would not receive them as ministers and brethren in Christ, or by their countenance and approbation bid them God speed.

The preaching of the independents was purely

evangelical. Owen, Goodwin, Charnock, and Flavel, next to the Word of God, were their favourite authors, whose writings they studied, and whose manner a considerable part of them endeavoured to adopt. In some of the sermons and treatises published by them during this period, we perceive a portion of the energy and unction of the nonconformists. Others drank too deeply of the spirit of controversy; and alarmed at the sight of the heresy of the presbyterians, spent too much of that sacred time in the confutation of error, which ought to have been devoted to the confirmation and application of evangelical truth: What congregation can be edified by the habitual discussion of religious controversies? The end is far more effectually answered by the peaceful representation of the doctrines of the Gospel in their evidence and use. In some of the independents, there was a dryness and coldness in exhibiting the principles of Christianity, of which the former age had given no example. Of this unsavoury mode, their more pious hearers made no complaint; and they received great edification from the excellent truths which were delivered by their pastors; but whatever might be their peculiar taste, this mode of preaching was certainly not calculated to produce a general impression on the audience, and especially on the younger part. The want, or rather a deficiency in the application, was a very common fault. Instead of the full address to the conscience and the heart, which formerly prevailed, after a long discourse on doctrinal points, and frequently blended with controversy, a few brief inferences or remarks contain all that was spoken to the heart.

Another fault may be found with the preaching of

some of the independents in this period: it was too little in a devotional and practical strain. Watts, and Doddridge, and hundreds more were intirely free from the charge; but against many it may be too justly adduced. They seem to have imagined, that if the doctrines of the New Testament be fully exhibited to Christians, they will feel themselves constrained to perform all its duties without exhortation or counsel from the preacher on the subject. But the minuteness with which the Spirit of God delineates every relative duty, and the speciality of motives by which they are enforced, teach good ministers of Christ, if they will but learn, a very different lesson.

Nor is the deficiency of taste among the independents, and inattention to the graces of composition to be entirely overlooked as a particle of dust in the balance. In a congregation of rustic and illiterate people, the style of the preacher, provided it is perspicuous, may be of little consequence. But when an audience contains many families of good education, and especially young persons of some refinement, the rudeness of the speaker may prove an injury to the best of causes. Virtue in a Hottentot's sheep skin which sends forth evil odours, will not be so readily received, nor so cordially embraced, as if she was arrayed in clean and neat attire.

A contracted spirit in too many of the ministers of of this denomination, must be considered as a still greater blemish. Their regards were confined within the walls of their own conventicle. The concern that every faithful servant of Christ should feel for the general interests of mankind, prompting to exertions for extending the knowledge of religion, appears

to have slipt out of their mind ; and they seem to have thought that they had no charge of a single individual of the human race, but those who composed their flock. The unkind idea had its influence on their preaching, which was chiefly addressed to the saints : perishing sinners had but a small portion of their labours.

It is to be regretted, but not concealed, that during this period there was among the independents a class of ministers, who did a considerable injury to the cause of Christ by undertaking an office which they were not qualified to fill, and by occupying the place of such as were. Of their piety there was no reason to doubt ; but a man may reach heaven as a private Christian, who is not qualified to conduct others to it, as a minister of Christ. They were inert, inefficient, cold, and lifeless as the grave. Their doctrine was pure, and they performed all the duties of their office with attention ; but they were torpid and dull, and they seemed in every exercise to be half asleep. The abilities of some of them were below the standard for the ministry : others were not deficient in this respect ; but their souls were never roused to energy, and they were strangers to that mental exertion and spiritual fervour which constitute an essential characteristic of a good minister of Christ. Under such men congregations declined in numbers and in piety.

But after every imperfection has been named, and due abatement made on that account, there was still more true religion among the independents than in any other denomination : so great a number of judicious Christians was no where else to be found. In the devotions of the closet and of the family, in the

sanctification of the Sabbath, in the pious regulation of their household, they preserved all the spirit of the dissenters of the former age. The sober manners, the assiduous industry, the economical habits, the abstinence from the vanities and amusements of the world, which marked the characters of the nonconformists, still remained. The lives of multitudes were eminent for sanctity, and their deaths for peace and joy: and the goodness of their principles was displayed by the triumphs of religion, both during the continuance and at the close of their mortal course. Of a considerable number of the orthodox presbyterians, the same character may be given, with perhaps this exception, that they did not exercise domestic authority with the same degree of vigour, but indulged their children in a greater degree of conformity to the ways of the world.

The religious sentiments of the two divisions of baptists, bore a close resemblance to those of the independents and presbyterians. Those of the particular denomination were all calvinists: and the remarks which have been made on the independents are applicable to such of them as were men of education: but the greater part were still (what is called) lay preachers—persons who were not trained up in academies for the pastoral office.

In the course of this period, this denomination received injury from the writings of Dr. Gill. He was the oracle of the body: and his books were spread extensively among them. Scarcely was there a lay preacher, but was tutored by him. The doctor's supralapsarianism is well known; and he carried his ideas as high as any of the name. His eyes were

perpetually poring on the divine decrees. The execution of them in the works of redemption and grace does not seem to have given him half so much pleasure as prying into the purposes and counsels of heaven : this subject is prominent in all his works. A scholar and a divine may peruse them with considerable advantage ; but to those who are rude in theological knowledge, the danger of receiving injury is not small. The unlettered preachers read them with eagerness and delight, carried the ideas into the pulpit, were often expatiating on the divine decrees, when they should have been enlarging on the revelation of a Saviour for the deliverance of perishing sinners, and from week to week perplexed themselves and their hearers with those secret things which belong to God. There are indeed few subjects on which minds untutored and unaccustomed to mental disquisitions, are apt to go so far astray. Nor does Dr. Gill himself appear to have escaped without injury. Zealous for what he conceived the honour of the divine decrees, he seems afraid lest God should save more than the elect ; and would not venture to call a sinner to repentance. His numerous disciples inherited his fears and followed his example. He had also imperfect ideas of moral obligation, and was peculiarly awkward at connecting the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. From the influence of his reputation, no inconsiderable injury was sustained by many plain ministers and plain people in that communion, who learned to be almost afraid of the commands of God, and received but a defective copy of the duties of a Christian. When such persons confine themselves to the simplicity of the Gospel, they often perform wonders ; but when they plunge into the depths of

the most intricate controversies, they shew that they have principles which they are unable to manage, and present the appearance of an unskilful rider on the back of an unruly horse who runs away with full speed, and never stops till he has thrown the unhappy man into a hedge of thorns.

Though these and other blemishes appeared among the particular baptists, still the evangelical doctrine was preached in purity by the majority, if with not great ability by some. The increase of the number of their congregations is an evidence of their zeal. Most probably, their piety was not inferior to that of their predecessors under the former period; and if they be placed next to the independents in respect to the measure of vital godliness which prevailed in their congregations, and was displayed in the deportment of individuals in private life, it appears to be the station which they are intitled to hold.

The smallest portion of religion at this time seems to have been with the general baptists. They were among the earliest to forsake their principles and to run into the arian system, nor did they stop there. Dr. Foster and Mr. Burroughs were known to be socinians at a time when no presbyterian minister would have dared to avow the racovian creed; and they were too rapidly followed into arianism at least, by the greater part of the original body. What has been said concerning the preaching and conduct of the arian presbyterians is applicable to the general baptists, but in a still higher degree. Some continued in their first principles, but they appear to have declined in piety.

From the view which has been given of the state of the different denominations of dissenters during the second period, this conclusion must evidently be drawn, "that to preach the doctrine of a Mediator and salvation through him is infinitely important, because it is essential to success." Intercourse between God and man through a Mediator is the fundamental principle of the religion of the sacred Scriptures. This religion begins in the reconciliation of man to God through the intervention of a Mediator; and through a Mediator, the preservation of friendship between God and man, which is the continuance of religion, is maintained to the end of life. To a Mediator every act of religion has respect. Such is the peculiarity of the system revealed from heaven, to which the salvation of sinners is ascribed. We are farther taught to consider the efficacy of the system as resting on the character of the Mediator, and deriving its virtue and power from the dignity of his person; and in every part of the New Testament, a display of this dignity is made. Where this scheme is faithfully preached, all the glorious effects, which are represented as resulting from the Gospel of Christ, are produced. But when the Mediator is reduced to the condition of a creature, the whole system of doctrine is necessarily changed; and its effects cannot but be different too. Whenever the divinity of the Mediator is rejected, the preacher has been generally found to grow weary of the doctrine of a Mediator, and leaving it out of sight, to retire into the principles of natural religion, and to speak of intercourse between the Deity and man, as if no Mediator was revealed; but this is not the system of the New Testament; and wherever it has been taught, congrega-

tions have uniformly lost the spirit of religion, and sunk into the spirit of the world.

To acts of pious benevolence performed by the dissenters during this period, it would be easy to adduce undeniable testimony; for they who continued to adhere to their original principles were not inferior in its exercise to those of the preceding age. Among other instances, the institution of the "society for promoting religious knowledge among the poor," deserves particularly to be recorded. In the beginning of the year 1750, two shocks of an earthquake, the second succeeding the first in the space of a few weeks, and superior in violence, roused the inhabitants of the metropolis, and filled multitudes with the most serious alarms. Good men, anxious to take advantage of the event, sought in different ways to render the serious impressions, created by the judgments of God, lasting and salutary. A public institution of extensive utility was the result. It originated with Benjamin Forfitt, a member of the presbyterian church in Eastcheap, who conceived the idea, that, by the distribution of the sacred Scriptures and books of piety among the poor and ignorant, the most essential benefit would be conferred upon them. In order to accomplish the object, he called together a few of his friends to solicit their co-operation^p. They formed their plan, entered into a subscription, and in the space of a few weeks commenced their active services by sending a donation of bibles and cate-

^p Samuel Taylor, Henry Grew, Henry Cockrell, William Adkins, and Samuel Sheaf, were the founders of this institution, and their names should be recorded among the benefactors of their country.

chisms to Dr. Doddridge. To the credit of the age, the society increased in the number of its members, and the power of its funds. It has continued in a respectable condition to the present time, and by the distribution of many thousands of Bibles and Testaments, and valuable treatises on religious subjects, has been the means of illuminating multitudes in every part of the country with the knowledge of divine truth. The original founders of the society were evangelical dissenters composed of presbyterians and independents; but it soon recommended itself to Christians of every denomination, and has ever since been supported by their united patronage¹.

While the disciples of Christ in the metropolis were thus exerting themselves, those in the country had not been less attentive to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. In 1741, Dr. Doddridge, whose soul was ever burning for the cause of God, formed an extensive plan for the advancement of religion in congregations, in dark parts of the country, and abroad. This plan he submitted to the associated ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk: it also received the approbation of the most eminent of the London ministers of various denominations; and the same year, at a meeting of all his brethren in the neighbourhood at Northampton, it was proposed; and in another, afterwards at Kettering, was cordially adopted, and began to be immediately carried into execution. It would do honour to any age of the church; and it will be read with peculiar interest by the most active and zealous disciples of Christ at the present time. Every one, who reads it, will be

¹ See Dr. Rippon's Discourse on the Origin and Progress of the Society.

fully convinced that the most eminent of the London, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Northamptonshire ministers of 1741, and Dr. Doddridge especially, would have rejoiced to see the plans and labours of the men of this day, and would have cordially co-operated in every measure for the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad'.

The plan is inserted in the dedication of his sermon "on the Evil and Danger of neglecting the Souls of Men." The following are its out-lines: "that each minister agree to preach one Lord's day on family religion, and another on secret prayer; that pastoral visiting be more solemnly attended to; that every head of a family, at least once a year, have a solemn charge to attend to the business of religion in his heart and house; that the work of catechising be set up in one form or other in every congregation; that pious persons, who do not receive the Lord's supper, be introduced into communion; that such as give offence by their conduct be excluded; that people be advised to enter into little societies, consisting of six or eight, for religious discourse and prayer, and meet once a week or fortnight; that a small number of persons most eminent for wisdom, piety, and zeal, act as a stated council for promoting religion in the congregation; that neighbouring ministers, in one part of the land and another, enter into associations to strengthen the hands of each other by united consultation and prayer."

The doctor also proposed to consideration, "that further measures be entered into for the admission of young persons into the ministry." He added the following branch of a plan which he was introducing among the members of his own congregation; "whether something might not be done in most of our congregations for the propagation of the Gospel abroad, and spreading it in the darker parts of our own land. In order to this, that pious people unite as members of a society; that they daily offer up some earnest prayers for the propagation of the Gospel in the world, especially among heathen nations; that they attend four times a year for solemn prayer; that some time be then spent in reviewing the promises relating to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; that any important information of the progress of the Gospel from foreign lands, be communicated at their quarterly meet-

During this period the quakers continued respectable for numbers, though perhaps they were not increasing. The manners of that day, more sober than those of the present, were favourable at least to their stability. But to estimate the state of religion among them, is more difficult than in most other sects. Abstinence from the fashionable follies of the world, forms a part of what may be called the civil code of the body, and does not so certainly mark the spirit of religion. All the diversity of sentiments which has been mentioned as prevailing in other denominations, was to be found among them: the spring of devout principles was of course more or less powerful; and perhaps there is no community in which there is a greater diversity of religious character. A high degree of praise is due to those devoted persons in this community who travel from town to town, and from country to country, to call sinners to repentance, and to stir up the professors of religion to the spirit of the Gospel. From the remarks made by such as are most extensively acquainted with the friends, it should seem that they sustain great injury in the frame of their minds, from the rejection of the Lord's-supper. That ordinance fixes the thoughts and affections of Christians on the grand foundation of evangelical truth, and has the most salutary influence on the heart and life. From the love of Christ in the redemption of sinners, the quakers have been observed too often to wander, and by no means to dwell on it with

ings; that each member contribute something towards supporting the expense of sending missionaries abroad, printing Bibles and other useful books in foreign languages, establishing schools for the instruction of the ignorant, or the like." *Doddridge's Tracts*, vol. II. p. 236—246.

the frequency and fulness which its importance and usefulness demand. In every thing relative to a pacific behaviour, and to abstinence from strife, contention, and bloodshed, none have imbibed an equal portion of the Christian spirit; and they have our cordial wishes that they could number among the members of their society, all the kings of the earth, their ministers of state, and their numerous armies.

On the state of religion among the methodists, it is not necessary that much addition should be made to what has been already specified in the account of their origin and tenets. The character of a methodist was in many respects new: he had no prototype before in England. There was a publicity in his religion which no other, dissenter, puritan, churchman, or reformer had ever displayed. Wherever he was, and in whatever company, in the house, the market, the inn, or the road, he conversed about religion. His conversation had this peculiarity, that he told of his former sinful life, his conversion to God, the alteration in his heart and conduct; and he plainly said to all, it was absolutely necessary that the same change should take place in them. He sought to be an universal reformer; and if there was reason to blame him for want of prudence, his honesty and his zeal entitled him to praise.

There is in every new community a superior energy, a peculiar fervour in the early days of its existence, which is heightened by an opposition from the world which harrasses but does not crush. This energy was evident in the beginning of Christianity; it appeared again at the reformation from popery; it was roused at the æra of nonconformity; and at the

close of this period was in full force among the methodists. It is pleasing and commendable, but it gives the appearance of more religion than really exists. Enthusiasm sometimes lurks under it; and wholly occupies the place of piety, or almost pushes it out of the heart. A striking instance of this occurred among the arminian methodists. Mr. Wesley had introduced from the mystics the doctrine of sinless perfection. Some of the greatest professors among his followers conceived they had attained it; and when they were going to receive the Lord's-supper, insisted that the confession should not be read, because as they were free from sin they had none to confess. Where opinions so absurd are entertained, there is reason to fear that the religion of such persons is more in the imagination, than in the heart. Indeed in every revival of religion, even where the pure truth is preached with the greatest wisdom and sobriety, it has always been found that in very numerous instances the passions were moved almost to extasy, when the soul has not been truly renewed.

Like almost every new sect, the methodists were at first exceedingly censorious, and inveighed with asperity, not only against the wicked, but against other Christians though as truly devoted to God as themselves. By their leaders they had unwisely been taught this unchristian lesson, which is exceedingly congenial to the depraved heart; for the Scripture saith not in vain, "the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy," it lusteth also to contempt and to dislike. Scarcely could two classes of good people be more different than the evangelical dissenters and the methodists. The former were a disciplined army of veteran warriors, long inured to service, and to whom

every part of service was familiar: the latter were soldiers of the revolution, not so expert, but full of enthusiasm, and eager for the battle. The difference was displeasing to the methodists, who charged the dissenters with coldness and deadness, many of whom for heart religion and sanctity of life, and faithful performance of relative duties were superior to themselves. The dissenters displeased at the charge, and provoked at the irregularities and imprudence of the methodists, were not backward to retaliate.

But whatever might be the weaknesses or the faults of the methodists, the spirit of propagation of religion which their system enjoined, and the unwearied endeavours of almost every individual to convert his neighbour, confer on them distinguished honour. It may indeed be questioned, if from the days of the apostles, the principle "that it is the duty of every Christian to endeavour to convert sinners from the evil of their ways," was ever so fully acted upon as by the English methodists of both divisions.

For their discourses too the methodists are entitled to singular praise. The talents of the leaders are known; and some of their helpers were men of ability, knowledge, and wisdom as well as zeal. With respect to the greater part of them, as to method, propriety of language, and delivery they were exceedingly defective. But in the choice of subjects, and in bearing upon the great design of their ministry, they have scarcely been equalled. To convert sinners was their business and their object, and they kept it in view with a steadiness and perseverance of which there has perhaps not been an instance of any sect in the Christian church. In the edification of

believers they did not excel; but in plain, earnest, forcible, and highly impassioned addresses to the impenitent, they are a pattern to all: and their labours were accompanied with success in an uncommon degree. Their practice has since been adopted by the evangelical preachers of every other denomination in England, so far as it suits the circumstances of such as officiate in stated congregations. The subject is kept more constantly in view than it ever was before: scarcely a discourse is preached, in which the conversion of a sinner to God is not hinted at, and in some measure explained and enforced: the practice is sanctioned by its success.

CHAP. VIII.

LIVES OF EMINENT PERSONS AMONG THE
DISSENTERS.

WITH the exception of a few, the men, whose lives we are now called to record, passed their days in peace. The stormy season in which their predecessors exercised their ministry was happily over; and the dissenting churches enjoyed rest. But the influence of a state of tranquillity on the character of the ministers of Christ is not always the most propitious. It has been frequently remarked that revolutions in the state elicit talents, and draw forth an extent of capacity and energy of soul, which external quiet would have allowed to remain inert and unknown. The sufferings of the church of Christ display similar effects. By opposition from the rulers of the earth, and the rigours of persecution, the most salutary influence on the minds of his ministers has been produced. Threatened with the loss of every temporal enjoyment they become disengaged from the world; and feeling the perilous situation in which the cause of religion is placed, they make the most powerful efforts in its behalf. The mind rises above its common tone, and being called forth to extraordinary acts of service or suffering, acquires a strength of powers, an acuteness and feeling above the common standard. This spiritual elevation may be perceived in the lives and writings of the reformers: there is a character in them almost peculiar to themselves. From the state of public affairs, the nonconformists passed the great-

est part of their lives in a storm, uncertain as to the continuance of their ministry, harrassed by their enemies, driven from place to place, frequently exposed to a prison, and sometimes enduring its confinement; their souls were thrown out of the ordinary course, they became more eminently pilgrims and sojourners on earth, and they felt the same holy sublimity and energy as their suffering brethren in former times. During the whole of this period, the dissenting ministers labouring in peace, their minds acquired a character from their situation and the surrounding objects, and moved in the even tenour which accorded with an externally peaceful state. An exception was now and then found in individuals, whose peculiar devotedness and zeal placed them in a higher region than their contemporaries, and created, as it were, an atmosphere peculiar to themselves. The methodists, by their itinerant labours, and the frequent opposition of their enemies, were in a state similar to that of authorized legal persecution; and the effect in giving elevation and energy to their minds was almost equally great.

JOHN SHOWER.

He was the second son of a pious and benevolent merchant of Exeter, and born in the year 1657. At four years of age he lost his father, but was reared up to maturity under the care of an excellent mother, and enjoyed the benefit of many pious relatives, among whom were Mr. Trosse, the subject of a former memoir; Mr. Benjamin Hooper, a servant of Christ, whose death was most extatic; and Mr. Downe, an eminent dissenting minister in Exeter, who marked the opening genius of this his nephew with great de-

light. When quite a child, he was observed constantly to retire to his closet for devotion, and to return in such a frame of mind as indicated that he had been conversing with heaven. He removed from a school in Exeter, at fourteen years of age, to the academy of Mr. Warren, at Taunton. Some time after, his mother removed to London for the sake of her children's education, and placed this son under the care of Mr. Morton, a distinguished scholar, at Newington-green, where he drew up and signed, in his eighteenth year, a covenant with God, which displays extraordinary ardour of devotion. He preached his first sermon two years after to the congregation of Mr. Thomas Vincent, in Bishopsgate-street, on the words of the psalmist, "I have chosen the way of truth," which he applied not only to his own individual sentiments, but to the theme of his ministry, and the connection which he was entering into with the nonconformists. When his liberal behaviour, many years after, gave rise to the rumour that he had conformed to the establishment, he referred to this discourse, and declared that his sentiments concerning the establishment and dissent were unchanged. His seriousness, which well accorded with his treatise on eternity, and the ardour of his affections poured forth in a happy flow of eloquence, soon rendered him popular in London, where, says Mr. Tong his biographer, "there were, at that time of restraint, more persons of the best rank who adhered to the dissenters than afterwards were found in times of liberty."

The alarm of the popish plot having induced the dissenters to establish in 1678, an evening lecture against popery at a room in a coffee-house, in

Exchange-alley, Mr. Shower, with three others, preached to a very numerous audience, among whom were the first merchants in the city. In the following year he was privately ordained, and being chosen assistant to Mr. Vincent Alsop, he was introduced to the company of many persons in high life, among whom his accomplished manners tended much to recommend the religion he was ever eager to diffuse.

After two or three years, he was importuned by the patriotic Sir Samuel Barnardiston to accompany his nephew in his continental tour. Reflecting on the prospects which presented themselves to him at home he consented, and about the year 1683 he went, in company with his pupil, Mr. Cornish, and a son of Dr. Thomas Goodwin, to Paris, and from thence to Lyons and Geneva. Charmed with the former diocese of Calvin, he stayed there some time, esteemed by the pastors of the city, and the celebrated Turretine, whom he found at first prejudiced by the representations of the hierarchy against the nonconformists, but left reconciled to the cause, which they saw, from Mr. Shower's statement, was founded in truth and religion. At Geneva he formed also a lasting friendship with Sir Richard Blackmore. From thence he went to Turin, Florence, and Leghorn, where they embarked in an English vessel for Naples, which, after a stay of fourteen days, they quitted for Rome. Here the popularity of Odechalchi, who was called the protestant pope, could not tempt our countryman to kiss the papal slipper; but the courage of one of the company in refusing to bow to the consecrated host was so resented, that it became necessary for them to leave "the seat of the beast" sooner than they intended. They went partly by sea to Venice,

and after having crossed the Alps they embarked on the Rhine for Strasburg; and being snatched from the most eminent danger of death on the river they arrived in Holland, where Mr. Shower continued two years.

On his return to England, he resumed his place in the lecture in Exchange-alley, and soon proved that he had not, like many, purchased his knowledge of mankind at the price of a tender conscience and communion with God; "for the more he knew of the world (says Mr. Tong) the more he seemed raised above it." His last sermon, on leaving England, was on the words of David, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both his ark and his habitation. But if he say thus, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." On his return, his first sermon at the lecture was on the aphorism of Solomon; "all things are full of labour, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing'."

• He used to relate to his friends, that when he heard the most celebrated French catholic preachers, they attempted, by strange methods, to work up the passions of their hearers on the sufferings of Christ. In the midst of a florid harangue they would take a small crucifix in their hands, and addressing themselves to it, as to the Saviour, with all the arts of eloquence and gesture, would inflame the passions of the people, till the whole assembly burst into tears, in which they were most forward who, at other times, were most prophane. Mr. Shower justly observed, "how much is it to be regretted, those who behold the Redeemer presented to view in the way which God has instituted, the glass of the Gospel, should not discover more of that genuine affection for him which he so well deserves."

He also related a very different scene to which he was witness. As the king of France was evidently intending to revoke the edict

But the measures which James the second now pursued, induced Mr. Shower, with Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, Mr. Howe, Sir Patience Ward, and Mr. Papillon, to retire to Holland. Mr. Shower went to Rotterdam, where he was chosen evening-lecturer to the English church, and married the niece of Mr. Papillon. Though highly valued in Holland, and pressed to take on him a pastoral charge there, he returned, in 1690, to labour with Mr. Howe in London. It was then observed that two such ministers as then preached together were too much for one people, and Mr. Shower soon judged it his duty to accept the invitation of a declining church, which his popular talents so increased that they removed to a larger place in Jewin-street, and, after ten years, to a new meeting-house in the Old Jewry. He enjoyed, for some time, the assistance of Mr. Timothy Rogers, and afterwards of Mr. Joseph Bennet. The labours of Mr. Shower were more than popular; they were useful, especially to the young, who are the hopes of the church of God.

of Nantz, the ministers of the church of Charenton kept many days of solemn fasting and prayer. On one of these occasions, when they had been engaged all day in exercises of devotion, an eminent minister ascended the pulpit, and, in a lively manner, set before the people the danger of the ark of God. His heart was so full that he could not go on, and there were floods of tears through the assembly, and an universal outcry. After a considerable pause he resumed the discourse, but was again interrupted by excess of sorrow, upon which he turned his discourse into prayer, and with wonderful enlargement and fervour, wrestled with God for his mercy, acknowledged his justice in whatever he should bring upon them, and, by a very solemn resignation, laid themselves, and all their privileges, at his feet, begging that if he saw it for his own honour to suffer the carcasses of that generation to fall in the wilderness, he would revive his work in the next, to which the whole congregation gave their assent by a loud—amen.

But in the midst of his honourable course he was seized with a fever, 1706, which, for three weeks, threatened his life. Restored to the prayers and affections of his flock, he enjoyed an interval of labour and success till a scorbutic complaint debilitated his frame; and in 1710 he was attacked with a paralytic stroke. After suffering under the apprehension of being laid aside "as a broken vessel, in which the Lord had no pleasure," he met death, with much delight, on the twenty-eighth of June, 1715, in the fifty-ninth year of his age.

Mr. Shower was a pattern to ministers in his choice of subjects, which, by their essential importance, shewed that his heart was in the right place. He never starved his hearers with criticisms, but quickly, though judiciously, dispatched all such questions, and hastened to address the heart and conscience. His warm and devotional affections frequently gave force to his earnest expostulations by floods of tears, and sublimity to his prayers, by the most exalted intercourse with God.

His "Reflections on Time and Eternity" have the high praise of being honoured by remarkable usefulness. His other publications were sermons on particular occasions, a sacramental treatise, and the "Memoirs of Mr. Henry Gearing."

DANIEL WILLIAMS, D. D.

The name of Daniel Williams, D. D. is equally celebrated among dissenters for his talents as a polemic divine, and his munificence as a benefactor to their cause. Wrexham, in the county of Denbigh, North Wales, gave him birth, about the year 1644. He was able to say, "from five years old I had no

employment but my studies ; and by nineteen I was regularly admitted a preacher." Faithful to the voice of conscience, he embarked with the dissenters when tossed with all the fury of the storm, and found the Redeemer faithful to his promise of recompense for every sacrifice made to his cause ; for, when sectarian bigotry drove him from England, he found, in Ireland, both a field of usefulness and a mine of wealth. In this country, he was first chaplain to the countess of Meath, and then pastor of a church in Wood-street, Dublin, where he laboured with great success for nearly twenty years. Having married a lady, who added to her hononourable birth and large estate, the superior endowments of intellectual eminence and ardent piety, as his religion was not injured, his usefulness was increased. But when the last acts of James the second gave warning to protestants that Ireland was designed to be the citadel of popery, he retired to London the year before the revolution.

He instantly acquired an ascendancy in his new sphere ; for, at a meeting of the dissenters, to consider of a vote of thanks to James for dispensing with the laws, he powerfully contributed to determine them against the measure : " I am persuaded (said he) that the severities inflicted on dissenters were rather for their resistance to arbitrary power than for their religious dissent ; so that it were better to be reduced to our former hardships than declare for measures destructive to the liberties of our country." To the praise of courage, patriotism, and self-denial, which this speech deserves, it is not so easy to add that of judgment and political acumen. For what is so essentially at war with the liberties of our own country, as those penal laws which restrict

the exercise of our natural rights in religion? Or how could political freedom be more effectually served, than by the unrestrained exercise of religious liberty, which, for the short time it was invidiously conceded, contributed to shake the throne both of popery and of James? As to the presbyterians' scruples concerning the king's right to abolish the the religious tests, when laws are contrary to God and nature, they have no hold upon the conscience; and a stern moralist might assert, that any one had a right to abolish them, who was happy enough to possess the power.

The revolution, however, extricated the presbyterians from their embarrassments, and introduced Mr. Williams to the new king, with whom he possessed a useful influence in Irish affairs. In the year 1688, he was chosen pastor of a numerous congregation in Hand-alley, Bishopgate-street, and from his friendship with Richard Baxter, was chosen to succeed him in the lecture at Pinner's-hall. He afterwards removed to that at Salter's-hall, in consequence of the controversy concerning Dr. Crisp's works. Dr. Williams sustained the seven years warfare with great equanimity and courage; and, as a committee appointed to investigate the charges of his enemies against his moral character, declared him blameless, his congregation adhered to him with unshaken fidelity and affection.

Principal Carstairs sent him from Scotland, in 1709, a diploma of D. D. inclosed in a silver box. After having stung to inexorable rage the earl of Oxford, by his faithful remonstrance against intolerance and the pretender, he was happy enough to escape his revenge by the death of the queen, and to present the

congratulation of the dissenters to king George on his accession to the British throne. Heaven answered the prayer of a minister who loved his Master's service, by not suffering him to survive his usefulness. Till within seven years of his death, he was not prevented from filling the pulpit more than five Sabbaths, and at last, a short illness terminated his labours on the twenty-sixth of January, 1716, in the seventy-third year of his life.

Dr. Williams deserves the high praise of enduring with honour, a test to which many persons of superior promise have proved unequal; for the seduction of affluence never diminished his relish for the pleasures, nor cooled his zeal for the interests of religion. Nor was it much less to his honour, that the provocations of controversy never alienated his affections from the objects of his first attachment, or betrayed him into tempers contrary to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The ardour, with which he defended what appeared to him the cause of holiness, secured him the admiration of his friends, while the strength of his polemical talents was felt by his opponents: but it is safer to bestow unqualified censure on the anti-scriptural works of Dr. Crisp, than to award praise of theological accuracy, or useful discussion to Dr. Williams. With a style chaste and lucid, but neither elegant nor vigorous, his works place him equally above the third, and below the first class of divines. His generous employment of a large fortune, to relieve the distressed confessors for truth, to assist his poor brethren in the ministry, and encourage young ministers in their entrance on the work, rendered his life a public blessing; and his last will, warm with the affections of a heart devoted to charity, to literature, to

dissent, and to catholic Christianity, has not suffered his usefulness to be terminated by the hand of death.

Besides the settlement to his wife, and legacies to his relations, he left donations for the education of youth in Dublin, and the support of a preacher to the native Irish; to the poor of the congregations in which he had been minister, and of the parish in which he lived; to several ministers' widows; to different presbyterian churches in the country; to the college of Glasgow; to several institutions for the diffusion of knowledge and the propagation of the Gospel. He ordered a convenient building to be purchased, or erected, for the reception of his own library, and the curious collection of Dr. Bates, which he purchased for that purpose, at the expense of upwards of fifteen hundred pounds. His works were collected and published in five volumes.

DR. JOHN GALE.

He was considered as one of the ablest ministers of his time among the general baptists. He was the son of a respectable citizen of London, who perceiving in him superior talents, determined to give him a liberal education, and devoted him in his mind to the work of the ministry. With this view he sent him to the university of Leyden, where he continued two years, and by his rapid improvement, the result of indefatigable application, he gained the esteem of the professors, and was honoured with the degree of master of arts and doctor in philosophy, before he was nineteen years of age. He went afterwards to Amsterdam, and spent some years among the remonstrants, under the tuition of Limborch and Le Clerc. On his return to England he pursued his studies with

redoubled ardour, and treasured up in his mind a considerable portion of valuable knowledge.

Dr. Gale did not begin to preach statedly till he was thirty-five years of age : an example by no means to be recommended to imitation : the vigour of life is far spent : a person is in danger of performing awkwardly what he begins so late : besides one never learns so accurately and so well, as when he is teaching at the same time.

“ The congregation to which Dr. Gale preached, is said to have been numerous and respectable : his voice was clear and melodious, his style easy and strong, his method exact, his reasoning convincing, and his deportment in the pulpit accompanied with a seriousness and solemnity becoming the work in which he was engaged. The object of his greatest care was to fix deeply in their minds and his own, that principle of sincerity on which he conceived our happiness or misery in a future state will depend : no acquirements in his estimation were to be compared to this.” Dr. Gale, we hope, did not misplace sincerity so grossly as his biographer has done. Paul was as sincere when he persecuted as when he preached the faith : the savage mahometan Timur, when, to expiate former offences, he purposed to close his life by destroying the idolaters of China, was as sincere as this champion of sincerity : and the blind Hindoo who puts the feet of his dying father in the waters of the Ganges and crams his mouth with the mud on the banks in order to smooth his way to future felicity, is as sincere as Dr. Gale. It should never be forgotten, that sincerity is not even a Christian virtue, but when it is connected with divine truth.

He was admitted to the friendship of several men

of eminence, both in church and state: and was a distinguished member of the society which met at Whiston's primitive library, to investigate the doctrines and practices of the Christian church, in the three or four first centuries, and to examine them by the sacred Scriptures.

In the Salter's-hall controversy he took a very active part; and in a pamphlet defended the conduct of the nonsubscribers. Whatever praise for liberality is due to the men of his side who believed the doctrine of the Trinity, nothing is due to him and some others but an acknowledgement of honesty in refusing to subscribe what they did not believe; though amidst the thousands of instances of clerical men setting their names to creeds which are contrary to their sentiments, honesty may be thought to merit no mean degree of praise. The publication which gave celebrity to his name was his "Reflections on Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism," in which he is generally acknowledged to have displayed considerable ability; and what is not so common in that controversy—mildness of temper. He was meditating many important works, a translation of the Septuagint; an exposition of the New Testament from the pulpit; and "a History of the Notion of Original Sin, with a view to trace the rise of this opinion, and to shew its repugnance to the justice and goodness of God, whom he conceives it represents as doing what a wise and good man would have abhorred." To succeed in this, he must have been able to destroy the historical records of every country and every age, for they are records of the temper and conduct of creatures sunk in the deepest depravity. The execution of these plans was prevented by the

attack of a fever, which put a period to his life in December, 1721, in the forty-second year of his age. His illness was of short duration, but "borne with that calmness and patience which became a mind firmly possessed with a belief in the superintendence of a wise and good God, to whose providence he always resigned himself and his affairs." Four volumes of sermons, with his life prefixed, were published after his decease. "He was (says one of his biographers) master of a solid morality, founded on the principles of reason and aided by revelation, which made him proof against the corruptions of vice, and led him to the practice of every virtue. His virtues were built on a rock, and nothing could shake or remove them." The apostle Paul says of himself, "by the grace of God I am what I am."

SAMUEL POMFRET.

In this whole period it will be difficult to find a more excellent minister of Christ than the subject of this article, who was born at Coventry in 1650. The only trait recorded of his father's character is, that "he was noted for the great power he had with God in prayer." After acquiring classical knowledge in the grammar school in the town, which was then in high repute, he was placed under the tuition of Dr. Obadiah Grew. From him he was sent to the university of Cambridge; "but the tenderness of his conscience (says his biographer) not allowing him to comply with the customs there practised," he removed to the academy of Ralph Button, B. D. at Isling-

* Crosby. Life of Gale. Funeral Sermons by Kinch and Burroughs.

ton, where he completed his preparatory studies for the ministry.

The grand qualification he received when he was nineteen years of age. He was before a decent youth, but destitute of piety. The death of his exemplary mother was employed by infinite wisdom to lead him to the knowledge of himself, and to produce in him repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The remembrance of so large a portion of life spent in impenitence, ever afterwards deeply affected his heart; and he used often to repeat the words of Austin, *sero te amavi domine*. I loved thee, Lord, too late.

Unwilling to engage so early in the work of the ministry, when he left the academy he went to officiate as chaplain in the family of sir William Dyer, in Essex. After residing for some time in that capacity, feeling a strong desire to see the world before he settled with a congregation, he went out chaplain of a merchant vessel trading to the Mediterranean, which carried a hundred men. Whether those engaged in extensive pursuits of commerce now take as much care of the souls of their sailors, they best can tell. On the voyage, as two Algerine corsairs approached in full sail to the attack, Mr. Pomfret being desired by the captain to go below, replied, "they are the enemies of Christ and his religion, I will remain on deck and live and die by you." He afterwards fought nobler battles, employed more legitimate methods to overcome the enemies of the cross, and displayed his courage in a way more becoming the character of a minister of Christ.

On their arrival at Smyrna, the English consul having lost a son, desired Mr. Pomfret to officiate at

his funeral, according to the usage of the church in England. As he could not conform to it in his own country, he said, he must be excused abroad; but he would accept his services in his own way, he was ready at his call. The consul giving a reluctant acquiescence, Mr. Pomfret spoke over the grave of the young man in so pertinent and affecting a manner, and prayed with such fervency and feeling, that not only his friends and countrymen, but Greeks and Turks shed floods of tears. At the conclusion of the service, the consul embracing him with gratitude exclaimed, "if this is your way, I judge it preferable to my own."

Another trait of his character appears in the following circumstance. Having purchased fifty pounds worth of hats, to dispose of as a venture abroad, he may be thought by many mercantile men to have carried them to an unprofitable market, when they are told, that he gave them all away to the sailors, on this engagement, as the stipulated price, "that they should no more profane the name of God." After this, it will not be thought strange, that he produced a great reformation in the ship: and some of the crew gave the most satisfactory evidence that it proceeded from a change of heart.

Returning to London, after an absence of two years, he established a lecture in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which met with great acceptance, and was exceedingly beneficial in its effects. But being invited to the charge of a congregation at Sandwich, he accepted it, and laboured there for seven years with indefatigable diligence and distinguished success. The persecution which raged in the latter end of king Charles the second's reign, drove him away, and he was constrained to take refuge in London. There he was

unwearied in his endeavours to do good ; and his biographer mentions, that threescore young men attached themselves to his ministry.

Prevented from returning to his charge in the country, he conceived it his duty to labour where he was, and formed a new congregation, which gradually increased till it became one of the largest in London. They met first in Winchester-street, and afterwards in Gravel-lane, Houndsditch, where a meeting-house was built, which, though it would contain fifteen hundred people, was crowded as long as he was able to exercise his ministry among them. He told a friend, that he had eight hundred members in his church, and the next Lord's-day, he was going to admit twenty more. To furnish such a harvest of converts, the labours of the preacher and their efficacy must have been uncommonly great. To both these, his biographer bears testimony, for he says, " that he exercised his ministry with great constancy and almost incredible pains, and through the blessing of God upon his labours, with such success, that some think the like has not been known in these latter times." He seemed indeed formed for extraordinary things: " he had a marvellous way of striking the consciences of sinners. Few could attend his ministry without strong convictions and awakenings ; multitudes of young people were greatly affected by it." His heart was warm and tender, his zeal as flames of fire, a fluency of apt expressions with a clear, agreeable, and powerful voice ; and frequently carried away by the ardour of his soul, he spoke in such a strain as moved his hearers in an astonishing manner. Mr. Baxter, one of the most powerful preachers in England, when discoursing with a friend about Mr. Pomfret's

zeal, and courage, and pains, delivered it as his opinion, " that God would bless him, and such as he was, more than others who excelled them in reputation as judicious preachers."

Sensible of the importance of an accession of knowledge, in order to the acceptance of his public labours, he was no less assiduous as a student. When not employed in visiting the flock, to the afflicted part of which he paid peculiar attention, he was to be found in his library deeply engaged in reading and meditation, with his pen in his hand writing down every useful thought which occurred to his mind in the course of his studies. So tenacious was he of every valuable idea, that he determined to secure it on paper, and this was his practice by night as well as by day, when travelling on the road, and in the houses of his friends.

As a Christian he was equally eminent. His devotedness to his Master was uncommon: he lived but to glorify God, and save souls. But what gave life and energy to the whole, was an unusual measure of the spirit of prayer. Such was his delight in it, that he rose every night from his bed to implore a blessing on his ministry. Perhaps, in the whole of the eighteenth century, there was not a minister in England so laborious in active services, who spent as large a portion of his time in prayer; and it was the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man which availeth much.

He wore out an iron constitution in incessant labours for the salvation of souls: and when he had arrived at threescore years and ten, numerous infirmities crowded upon him, and continued to increase. He bore his sufferings with great sub-

mission to the divine will, "and a lively hope and stedfast confidence of the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ." To one that came to render him assistance, he said with great earnestness, as he used to do in matters that were upon his heart, 'Come, see, see a dying man under exquisite pains, and yet not afraid to die. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'" After serving the Lord Jesus Christ in the work of the ministry near fifty years, he died on the eleventh of January, 1722, in the seventy-first year of his age. He published only a small treatise entitled, "a Directory for Youth," and a few sermons^u.

England sustained a loss from his not spending a portion of his time as an itinerant. In several parts of the country where he happened occasionally to preach, congregations were immediately raised. Of all the men who have appeared in the capacity of itinerants, Mr. Pomfret, in every grand qualification for that office, would have been next to Mr. Whitefield, and in some things, at least his equal.

BENJAMIN BENNET.

He was born at Willsborough, near Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, in 1674. A dangerous illness, almost in childhood, was the means, through the divine blessing, of fixing on his heart impressions of religion which were never afterwards erased. He immediately sought to do good to others, and formed a society of boys who met to engage in the exercises of devotion. When he arrived at an age for applying

^u Memoirs of the Life of S. Pomfret, by T. Reynolds.

to business, he expressed an earnest desire to be trained up for the service of the sanctuary. After going through a course of theological studies, his first station as a preacher, was at Temple-hall, in the vicinity of his native place, from which he was called to succeed Dr. Gilpin, at Newcastle upon Tyne, in a very extensive field of labour and usefulness.

Mr. Bennet possessed very superior talents, which were exerted to the utmost in the discharge of his office. His discourses were weighty and striking. He at once instructed and moved his hearers, whom he commonly delighted with something new. His delivery, which was grave yet pleasing, possessed a dignity and solemnity that had a most powerful effect on the congregation. He took great delight in his work, and was ready to labour in season and out of season. The importance of embracing every opportunity was impressed on his heart in a powerful and lasting manner by a circumstance which occurred to him during a visit to London. Being importuned to preach at a time when he wished to be excused, Timothy Rogers, who was for several years oppressed with melancholy, addressed him in the following words: "oh! preach, by all means preach; I would fain preach, but cannot. How do you know but you may do some good, which you may never hear of till the day of judgment."

In dispensing the Lord's supper, he displayed an uncommon measure of a devotional spirit. His heart was so powerfully affected with the love of Christ, and he expressed himself with so much pathos and unction, that he was thought in that exercise to excel himself. Nothing is more discreditable to a minister than to be cold and unaffected at the table of the Lord;

it is the most shocking inconsistency which can be well conceived. The fluency, the fervour, the pertinency, the holy rapture of his prayers melted the hearts of the audience; and his brethren when present have acknowledged that they were at once greatly edified, and deeply humbled at their own inferiority.

When a minister excels in public services, it need scarcely be told, that he has laboured hard in private. Mr. Bennet was an indefatigable student, and amidst the various duties of his office in a large congregation, constantly devoted fifty and sometimes sixty hours in a week to hard study. By this means, he collected a very large treasure of divine and human knowledge.

But that which infused life into both his preaching and his studies, was the eminent piety which reigned in his heart. The first hour in the morning was spent in reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer; and another in the evening. Every month, it is said, he kept a day of extraordinary devotion; and passed the greater part of it on his knees. He observed frequent fasts with some of the members of the church at his own house, and sometimes more public ones in the congregation. If after this, it be mentioned that he was an eminently wise, prudent, peaceable, and spiritual minister, who lived wholly for the honour of Christ and the happiness of others, and that he was useful by his counsel and influence to all the churches in the northern parts of England, it is only what might be expected from such a man.

That Mr. Bennet might long be spared, every lover of mankind would utter his most fervent wishes; but God's thoughts are not as ours. In his fifty-second year he was seized with a fever, which raged with such violence as in a few days to put an end to his

valuable life. The virulence of his disease led him to look for death; he was not only willing but desirous to die. "Death," said he, "is no more to me than it is for a weary traveller, after a hard day's journey, to undress and go to bed. Some considerations, I confess, might plead for my stay in the world a while; but they cannot prevail with me to desire to live. I only desire, that if providence sees fit to continue me, I may submit." And at another time, "I have not one uneasy thought about myself: death is no awful thing to me, but will be a happy remove to the church above, where I have long been desirous to be." He died on the first of September, 1726. In his person he was tall and stout; and there was something in his appearance at once venerable and graceful*.

His death was deeply lamented by all the friends of religion in the north of England; but like Elijah happily he left his mantle behind him. His "Christian Oratory," which has gone through seven editions at least, is "the Dissenters' whole Duty of Man:" but unspeakably superior to that work for its evangelical strain. "A Memorial of the Reformation," and "a Defence of it" contain both entertainment and instruction. "Discourses on Popery." His "Irenicum" is not much known. Like many other good men, he was not aware of the pernicious effects of arianism, and he entertained a more favourable idea of the sentiments of some of the dissenting ministers than they deserved. The general principles of the book are good, but not suitably applied. A volume on the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures has been already noticed. It shews a master's hand in every part, in a pleasing union of learning and piety.

* Funeral Sermon for B. Bennet, by S. Worthington.

JEREMIAH SMITH.

Jeremiah Smith is one "whose record is on high," though it is now difficult to weave a continued narrative of his life from those defective materials which remain to us. He must have been born about the year 1653, but the seminary, in which he studied for the ministry is not known, though it is certain that he entered upon the work amidst the terrors of persecution. He was first pastor of a church at Andover, in Hampshire, and afterwards succeeded Mr. Spademan as copastor with Mr. Rosewell, in Silver-street, where he was also one of the Friday-evening lecturers. As this was a superior station among the dissenters, his talents and devotion honoured the discernment of those who called him to it; though, in the decline of life, the failure of his voice occasioned a decrease of his hearers, and obscured his eminent worth.

Amidst the theological contentions of the year 1719, he stood forth the champion of the Trinity; for being one of the four who composed the work entitled, "the Doctrine of the Trinity stated and defended," he wrote the part which shows the harmony of the reformed churches in regard to that doctrine. Though he subscribed, and his colleague ranked with the nonsubscribers, their harmony continued undisturbed, for "they equally believed the truth." Matthew Clarke, in his funeral sermon, says, "he was warm, and was there not a cause, in a day when the most pernicious and destructive errors, so highly derogatory to the Redeemer's glory abound among us? Yet his zeal was of the right stamp, conducted with prudence and discretion, tempered

with meekness and charity, without rancour and bitterness. His zeal, like our Lord's, did eat up himself, not consume others. He was for no fire from heaven, but that of the spirit of judgment and burning to enlighten mens minds, to lead them into all truth, and purge them from the dross of errors and corruptions." In this manner he continued to preach the faith, which others were attempting to destroy, till near seventy years of age; when he was taken ill on a journey, and after recovering so far as to have fixed the next day for his return home, was seized with a violent convulsion, which in half an hour terminated his life on the twenty-ninth of August, 1723.

With uncommon pathos his loss was bewailed by Matthew Clarke, who describes him as a most exemplary Christian, displaying the influence of religion in every relation of life. He watched over his flock like a good shepherd. "He did not offer that, to the Lord or his people, which cost him nothing, as was evident to all that heard him. His composures were somewhat elaborate, smelt of the lamp, which, as I have been told by his nearest relative, often burned till after midnight." His style is, however, remarkably perspicuous, and his discourses prove that he was not thinking of himself, but aiming solely at the consciences of his hearers. Amidst a volume of sermons preached before the society for reformation of manners, by the most eminent men of that day, one of Mr. Smith's shines with peculiar lustre. The Exposition of the Epistles to Titus and Philemon, in the continuation of Henry, was by his pen.

MATTHEW CLARKE.

He was the son of the Rev. Matthew Clarke, who was ejected from the living of Narborough, in Leicestershire. The venerable father contrived, amidst all that he suffered for conscience' sake, and he drank largely of the bitter cup, to take peculiar care of the education of his son, whom he early instructed in the learned languages, along with several young persons who were studying under him for the ministry. The parent's wish, to see his son a preacher of the same Gospel for which he was suffering, was honourable to himself; but it seems to have led him to devote the child to the work, without waiting to see whether God approved, which, but for the grace bestowed upon the youth, might have been a fatal injury to himself and thousands more. After revolving the question seriously in his mind, and reflecting on the sacrifices which the ministry would require, the son was at last animated to comply with his parent's wish, by the consideration, that "they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the sun for ever and ever." On examining his own personal religion, he said that he had endured much distress for want of that remarkable change, which many had experienced; but he dreaded above all things a hypocritical profession, and though, at first, his abstinence from sin, as well as his attention to secret prayer, and other duties, might arise from fear of offending his parents, yet he trusted that at last they sprang from a principle of love to God.

After he had acquired not only Latin and Greek, but several of the oriental languages, in which his

father possessed uncommon skill, and had added to them a familiar acquaintance with Italian and French; he went to study for the ministry under Mr. Woodhouse, a celebrated tutor, in Shropshire. From thence he removed to London, and having joined a church there, and heard several of the most celebrated preachers, he returned to Lecestershire, where his father preached to a congregation of dissenters at Little Bowden, near Market Harborough, for above forty years. Here young Mr. Clarke began his ministry, amidst the storm which raged in the year 1684. He was so useful, that very large additions were made to his father's church, while he was with him. "When he was present," says Mr. Neal, "at the declaration which the new converts made of the powerful impressions received under his ministry, O how he would humble and abase himself before God in prayer, and set the crown of his success upon the head of free grace." In the first three years of his ministry, he also laid the foundation of several congregations in that country.

He was, in 1687, called to preach at Sandwich, in Kent; where he was detained by the importunities of those who derived benefit from his labours; but after two years was recalled by the equal solicitations of his father and the flock in Leicestershire. Though he then settled with them, they were compelled by a sense of duty to give him up again almost immediately; for having preached an occasional sermon in London, he was invited to assist Mr. Ford, in Miles'-lane. The metropolis was, at this time, peculiarly in need of young ministers; for while many of the old confessors were removed by death, and the threatening aspect of the times had prevented a sufficient number

from entering into their field of labour, the alarm for the safety of protestants had produced a sudden turn in favour of dissenters, so that the people flocked to the meeting-houses and the harvest was great, though the labourers were few.

At first, Mr. Clarke found many difficulties, among which, it is mentioned to his honour, that the sum, which the congregation could raise for his support, was so small that they were ashamed to inform him of it. But when he knew it, he said he had cast himself upon the providence of God, which had always provided well for him, and as he had no reason to question their doing for him according to their ability, he should be satisfied with the will of God, and be content to fare as God should bless them together. About this time he was ordained, and the private devotions, which accompanied the public service, proved him solicitous to be found accepted of the chief Shepherd.

Mr. Ford, the elder minister at Miles'-lane, dying in 1694, Mr. Clarke succeeded him as pastor of the church, and, taking the whole of the service, was in a short time the means of changing a declining cause into the most prosperous congregation in London. Seven or eight members were added in a month to the church, and the place was crowded with hearers. About this time, Mr. Clarke was chosen one of the lecturers at Pinner's-hall. The sphere of extensive usefulness in which he was now fixed, he filled, much to the advantage of the interest of religion, till death removed him from the vineyard.

The popularity of Mr. Clarke induced the churches to make frequent applications to him for occasional services, which his ardent zeal for the interests of

religion would never suffer him to refuse; but the excessive labours of body and mind, which perpetual preaching produced, injured his constitution more than he was willing to perceive; till in the spring of 1707, he was confined by an alarming fever. The disorder was so violent and extraordinary, that the physicians knew not how to prescribe, and after many unusual applications, they pronounced his case hopeless. Mr. Clarke settled his temporal affairs, and having taken a solemn leave of his wife, requested to see Dr. Watts who visited him, and after witnessing with exquisite delight "his holy calmness of mind, and firm reliance on the merits of Christ alone for salvation, commended him as a dying man, to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The afflicted church appointed seasons of public prayer and intercession for the life of their pastor, which were continued for nine days, and attended by most of the ministers of the city. "I must confess," says his biographer, Mr. Neal, "I never was present at any solemnity of this nature, where there were such 'strong crying and tears' to him who was able to save from death." The physicians, who attended to watch the progress of the disease, though without any hope of administering relief, prescribed, by way of experiment, the strongest cordial that could be prepared, to be taken in a very large quantity. Within a quarter of an hour, he lifted up his hands and said, "I am persuaded this medicine is from God," for the benefit was immediate, and from that time he rapidly recovered. His appearance in the pulpit on a day of thanksgiving, which the church appointed, was peculiarly affecting. Mr. Tong preached first on the words of the apostle concerning Epaphroditus, "for indeed

he was sick nigh unto death, but the Lord had mercy on him;" after which Mr. Clarke returned thanks to God, and then to his flock, and the ministers who had so affectionately interceded for him, and in a most impressive discourse declared the solid satisfaction he had enjoyed in the prospect of eternity, and his resolution to consecrate anew to God the life which he had so kindly prolonged.

He returned to his labours under the influence of the apostolic precept, "yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead." His former vigour of body was, indeed, never completely restored, but all his former zeal blazed forth, and was crowned with renewed success. On the death of George, prince of Denmark, Mr. Clarke was deputed by the dissenting ministers of London to present their address of condolence to queen Anne, who received him in her closet. Seven years after, Mr. Clarke's usefulness was interrupted by a fall, which confined him many weeks with a broken leg. Yet after this, he undertook additional labours, accepting the place of Thursday-morning lecturer in Hanover-street, till his congregation, observing his decline, chose, in 1720, Mr. Timothy Jollie as his assistant. He was, in 1722, called again to appear at the head of the protestant dissenters, with an address of congratulation to the king, on the discovery of the popish plot. Towards the close of life he was much depressed by the divisions which the arian controversy had introduced into the dissenting body. "But," said he to Mr. Neal, "I shall shortly be out of the way, I am not far from the place where the weary are at rest." He gained this blissful haven on the twenty-seventh of March, 1726, in the sixty-third year of his age.

His person was above the middle size, graceful and commanding, while his piercing eye aided the expression of a melodious voice. He added the manners of a gentleman to the erudition of a scholar, and rendered his various accomplishments lovely and effective by the graces of a Christian, who lived only for God and religion. "But if he triumphed any where," says Mr. Neal, to whom we are indebted for an excellent memoir of him, "it was in the pulpit." His subjects were well chosen, and he brought down the most sublime truths to the level of his hearers; for though his language was too chaste and correct to offend the most learned, it was so simple and lucid that it must have been peculiarly instructive to the young, the poor, and illiterate. Free from all that could be called cant, he might have been understood by those who never before heard the language of any religious party; while he preached the doctrines of the Gospel so fully, that it was evident he loved them, and with such fervour, that it was manifest he deemed them essential to the eternal safety of his hearers. With the courage of a lion in the pulpit, he was gentle and inoffensive as a lamb in the private intercourse of life; and indeed was considered, towards the close of his days, to be chargeable with excess of modesty and timidity as his chief fault. He stood at the most awful distance from covetousness, which he regarded with horror; and as his house was that of a bishop "given to hospitality," his heart was that of an apostle, which could not be confined within the sphere of his own immediate charge, but embraced the whole church of Christ upon earth. He corresponded with his brethren in different parts of the kingdom, and by his powerful interest in the city,

collected large sums for their relief. He was one of the first members of the society of congregational ministers and gentlemen for the support of the Gospel in the country, and as it lay near his heart in death, his last sermon to his own flock recommended it to their support. The popularity which he obtained, not by empirical pretences, or unfaithful accommodations to a depraved taste, but by solid excellencies, which the Redeemer crowned with distinguished usefulness, followed him to the last; and while he drew vast crowds to the different places where he frequently preached, he never appeared least loved where he was best known; but left his own charge the most numerous and flourishing congregation in the metropolis. With the inspiration of friendship, added to that of genius, Dr. Watts composed a Latin epitaph which was inscribed on his tomb in Bunhill-fields, and at the request of friends, he gave an English translation which would furnish an elegant and spirited memoir of the deceased.

WILLIAM TONG.

As it was said of Cesar, that by erecting Pompey's statue, he established his own, it may be observed, that Mr. Tong, though a wise and good man, has chiefly perpetuated his own memory by becoming the biographer of Matthew Henry. It is, however, due to him, who recorded another's excellencies, that those who have only known him by the memoirs of the eminent commentator, should value him for his own worth. He was born on Midsummer-day, 1662, of pious parents, who resided at Eccles, in Lancashire, but was, by the loss of his father when

quite young, left under the care of an excellent mother; for whom he often blessed God, as one of his greatest mercies. Mr. Tong was at first educated for the profession of the law, and commenced his acquaintance with Matthew Henry, when he also was pursuing the same studies at Gray's Inn. How much reason have we to adore the providence of God, who called these excellent men to preach the Gospel of his Son, by which their usefulness has been perpetuated beyond the duration of human laws! Mr. Tong himself gratefully esteemed his mother, for the influence she exerted in causing him to be educated a dissenter and a minister, and used to say, "had I a son, who promised to be serious and faithful, I should prefer training him to the ministerial profession, above any other calling however lucrative."

He entered the seminary of the venerable Mr. Frankland, in 1681, and began to preach, when the accession of James the second covered the nation and the church of Christ with a portentous cloud. Far from being terrified at the danger, he boldly risked the loss of all things, and frequently preached to the poor people in the country, when he knew not but he should be recompensed at night by a jail. He became early acquainted with Philip Henry, and the excellent connections of that apostolic man; who easily perceived Mr. Tong's worth, and welcomed his labours among them. But being threatened with a prosecution in the spiritual court, he was obliged to desist from preaching in those parts, which probably increased his attachment to the principles that had induced him to withstand some very pressing solicitations to enter the establishment.

Before Matthew Henry could settle at Chester, his

biographer was preparing the way for his future usefulness, which he thus modestly mentions. "Mr. Henthorne had always been forward to promote the preaching of the Gospel in that city, where God had greatly blessed him, he now offered the use of his large and commodious house for the worship of God, and pressed Mr. Henry to come, telling him the ice was broken, and that they had desired his friend Mr. T. to preach to them till he came among them." Here Mr. Tong resided for some time, entertained in the house of Mr. Henthorne, with as much kindness as if he had been the nearest relation. The numbers who flocked to hear Mr. Tong, on the evening of the Lord's-day and at the intervals between the established worship, being much increased, Mr. Henthorne again accommodated them with a large outbuilding, which they fitted up for a place of worship. The success that attended his ministry here, especially among the young, was so great, and of so much importance in laying the foundation of Mr. Henry's future prosperity, that the humble manner in which he has noticed, or rather concealed it, in the memoirs of his friend, can scarcely receive sufficient praise. His usefulness was threatened with a sudden termination, by what were deemed symptoms of a consumption, but he was shortly restored to the flock, and on Mr. Henry's arrival at Chester resigned to him the pastoral care.

He was again called to plant a church at Knutsford, in Cheshire, which he soon after left to be watered by others. The friends of religion in this town, had long enjoyed the labours of Mr. Turner, the established clergyman, from whom those who were dissenters in principle never chose to separate.

But when they who had been accustomed to choose their own minister, found another chosen for them, who rigidly enforced the ceremonies of the establishment, many of them withdrew, and formed a dissenting church, of which Mr. Tong, by the advice of the two Mr. Henrys and many other valuable friends, consented to become the pastor. The success which attended his labours in this infant society, was beyond his expectations, and the difficulties which he dreaded, from the rancour and opposition excited by recent circumstances, were prevented by his prudent, pacific, catholic spirit.

After two years, he was again removed to succeed the celebrated Dr. Grew, at Coventry. His zeal and diligence advanced with the extension of his sphere; for beyond the city of his residence, he published the Gospel, preaching in many towns and villages, with so much success, that many new churches were formed, and multitudes in that country carried with them into eternity the grateful recollection of his ministry. This itinerant spirit deserves the higher praise, as he was at the same time engaged in educating several young gentlemen of rank, and some ministers who afterwards were distinguished in the church of Christ.

On the death of Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, the congregation at Salter's-hall invited Mr. Tong to succeed him. He entered on this important station in 1704, and was soon after chosen one of the Tuesday lecturers. His reputation and his usefulness increased; he had one of the largest and richest congregations in London, which he improved to the best of purposes, for they were induced by his exhortations to make the greatest contributions to aid the poor churches in

the country. His influence was also powerful among the higher classes, and many who were not dissenters, deemed themselves honoured by his friendship, which he ever considered a talent entrusted to him for the Redeemer's service. In the disputes at Salter's-hall, he divided with those who approved of subscribing to the doctrine of the Trinity; and before this, had drawn up an introduction to the work written by Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Reynolds, entitled "the Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity stated and defended." He was dismissed, by an easy death to rest from his labours, March 21, 1727, at the age of sixty-five. In him the dissenters lost one of their brightest ornaments; for his superior learning was by his eminent religion consecrated to God, and by the suavity and grace of his deportment both were rendered acceptable and useful to men. When in his vigour, he was pronounced the prince of preachers, for his was the eloquence, which steals silently into the heart, like flakes of falling snow. His reformation sermon is, in point of composition, much superior to his biography of Shower or Matthew Henry, though the latter is highly valuable for laying open to us the soul of Henry himself; to the completion of whose commentary he contributed by an exposition of the epistle to the Hebrews.

THOMAS REYNOLDS.

He was the son of a pious citizen of London, who enjoyed the inestimable advantage of being a member of the church over which Mr. Howe watched. He was at first designed for the law, and when he had been some time under the tuition of Mr. Singleton,

an eminent classical scholar, he was sent to Oxford, where he found his tutor so disagreeable, that he prevailed with his father to remove him. On his return to London, the persecutions which the dissenters were then enduring, compelled him to resort to the establishment, where he derived so much benefit from the ministry of one good man, that his whole character was changed. He now wished above all things to become a preacher of the Gospel, among the nonconformists; and when his father reminded him of what he must endure, he declared that he had counted the cost, and if he might be successful in bringing one soul to Jesus Christ, it would yield him more satisfaction than thousands of gold and silver." Delightfully vanquished by such a reply, the father placed him at the academy of the learned Mr. Morton, at Newington-green, before he was sixteen, though his gravity and choice of companions, as well as his advancement in learning, were such as would have done honour to maturer years.

The threatening aspect which the government assumed towards dissenting colleges, induced several young men to retire to Geneva, to which retreat they were accompanied by Mr. Reynolds. Here they attended the valuable lectures of Turretine, one of the first divines of that or any other age; but Mr. Reynolds was distressed with the deepest despondency with regard to his own salvation, which would have incapacitated him for study, had he not been effectually relieved by the conversation of an excellent Christian, who happened then to be at Geneva. He removed from thence to the university of Utrecht, to enjoy the instructions of the celebrated De Uries, professor of philosophy, and of Witsius who then

filled the divinity chair with high and deserved reputation. The distinguished advantages which he enjoyed, were in some measure diminished by infirm health; but his religion, which is too frequently injured by the eager pursuit of learning, retained its seriousness and ardour unabated.

On his return to London, Mr. Reynolds was immediately announced as a superior preacher, so that he was chosen to assist Mr. Howe, his former pastor. He was one of those who were set apart at the first ordination among the dissenters. But while highly valued by Mr. Howe, and his respectable congregation, he deemed it his duty to accept the invitation of a very small church in Canon-street, which had been recently deprived of a pastor by the death of Mr. Thomas Kentish, an ejected minister. His settlement here in 1695, displayed a noble decision of character, and ardent zeal for the interests of the church of Christ, to the neglect of all selfish considerations. His reward soon followed him, for his congregation so rapidly increased, that, in two years, they removed to a new place of worship, which they had obtained leave to build over the King's Weigh-house, in Eastcheap. This must have been at that time a mighty undertaking, and that it should have been accomplished by a society, which so lately consisted of but seventeen men, is a striking proof of Mr. Reynolds' success in his new sphere. The labours of more than thirty years confirmed these early hopes, and extended the reputation of his usefulness. He was chosen one of the Friday-evening lecturers at the Weigh-house, and was associated with those who preached the merchant's lecture on Tuesday mornings.

The Salter's-hall synod, however, involved Mr.

Reynolds, as well as many others in trouble. Mr. James Read, his assistant, being opposed to subscription, which his colleague approved, the difference between them was heightened by some suspicions of Mr. Read's orthodoxy, which occasioned his dismissal from the Weigh-house July 20, 1720. This produced a pamphlet war, vexatious to Mr. Reynolds, who wished to devote the ardour of his character to nobler purposes than contention among brethren, and who was so much affected by the trouble of his mind, that he became dangerously ill. The absence of the shepherd was ungenerously improved by some to entice away the flock; who, however, were so faithfully attached to him, that not more than a dozen followed Mr. Read, out of three hundred members which composed the church. He returned to his work again, with fresh vigour and success, which continued to the end of his days; for as he had often prayed, with peculiar earnestness, that he might not survive his usefulness, the last time he appeared in public he administered the Lord's-supper with as much animation and fervour as he had ever displayed. The reflections which had been thrown out against him, for the part he took in the arian controversy, accompanied with insinuations that he repented of his zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity, induced him to pray that he might not die under a cloud and thus bring a dishonour upon Christ, or cast a stumbling-block in the way of his people. Mr. Wood, his assistant, who attended him in his last moments, records the manner in which God answered his prayers. "I have been more than once with dying ministers, but never saw more of God's gracious presence, or so much of the light of his

countenance. To his wife he said, let my God be yours; be faithful unto death; it will not be long before we meet, where we shall never part, never more be sad. O the joys I feel! My heavenly Father is carrying me to heaven. I am going thither on a bed of roses." He came to his happy end, August 25, 1727, aged sixty.

Amidst the opprobrium which he endured for his ardent and faithful testimony to the doctrines of the Gospel, which will be recorded to his honour, and the distinguished usefulness which formed one of the most flourishing congregations that now exists among the dissenters of London, he maintained a humbling sense of his own deficiencies, which stamps the highest value on his personal religion. In his will, made a few years before his death, he says, "If Mr. Wood shall consent to preach a sermon, and shall think fit to say any thing of me, let it be no more than this, that not being able to do more good, was the greatest burden which attended me through life, and the incomprehensible infinite mercy of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, is my only refuge, my chief support in the prospect of death."

DR. EVANS.

Dr. John Evans was born about the year 1680, at Wrexham, in Denbighshire. He was descended from ministers for four generations, and only one link was wanting in the chain, up to the æra of the reformation. His father was minister at Wrexham, but was residing at Oswestry, when the act of uniformity compelled him to relinquish the office of master of the free school in that town. His mother, who was daughter of Col.

Gerrard, governor of Chester castle, was one of those superior women who adorned the church of Christ at that period. This son was placed, first under the care of Mr. Thomas Rowe, near London, and studied afterwards at the seminary of Mr. Timothy Jollie. On leaving the academy, he went to reside at the seat of Rowland Hunt, esq. in Shropshire, whose hospitable mansion was the resort of many of the excellent of the earth. In this delightful retirement he performed the herculean task of reading through the five ponderous folios of Poole's Synopsis criticorum; and, under the direction of the learned James Owen, the Christian writers of the three first centuries, from whom he made valuable extracts, illustrative of the doctrine and discipline of the primitive church. He afterwards accepted an invitation to settle at Wrexham, where he was ordained the eighteenth of August, 1702, Matthew Henry assisting in the service.

Dr. Williams, of London, hearing that Mr. Evans was invited to Dublin, to prevent his leaving England, sent for him to the metropolis, where he first assisted the doctor, afterwards became co-pastor, and at length succeeded him at his death. Though differing in some points, which they amicably debated, their union was maintained with uninterrupted cordiality. Previously to entering on his new charge, Dr. Evans spent a whole week in devotional retirement. The time was not lost; for the eminence of his religious and pastoral character was exceedingly great, and his usefulness in many instances extraordinary. He was several years engaged in the Lord's-day-evening lecture at Salter's-hall, and afterwards in the merchant's lecture there. His congregation having much in-

reased, they built a larger meeting-house in New Broad-street, Petty France, which was opened on the fourteenth of December, 1729. In the Arian controversy he refused to subscribe to any articles, but maintained the orthodox sentiments. He was at this time engaged in a dispute with Dr. John Cumming, minister of the Scotch church, London Wall, on the importance of Scripture consequences, in which he acquired considerable reputation. The two universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen sent him, in a very honourable manner, the unsolicited diploma of doctor of divinity.

In the public services of the dissenters he was often called to preside, and was appointed to assist in completing Matthew Henry's commentary, of which he supplied the notes on the epistle to the Romans so well, that Dr. Doddridge says, "the exposition of the Romans, begun by Henry, and finished by Dr. Evans, is the best I ever saw." He was for some years preparing to write a history of nonconformity, from the reformation to the civil wars, but by his death the work devolved on Mr. Neal. He was removed from his various useful labours by a complication of disorders, which terminated in death on the sixteenth of May, 1730, when he was in his fifty-first year. In his last illness he said, "though I cannot affirm, as a late venerable minister among us (Mr. F. Lorimer) a little before his death, that I have no more doubt of my acceptance with God than I have of my own existence, yet I have a good hope through grace, and such as I am persuaded will never make me ashamed. This corruptible shall put on incorruption. O glorious hope!" His discourses on the Christian temper form one of the best practical treatises in the

English, or any other language; and will render his memory dear to many who will learn from his book the nature and excellence of that spirit which he exemplified in his life. Dr. Doddridge speaks highly of his sermons to young people; and he who renders religion intelligible and lovely to the young, performs a valuable service to the church of God. He published many occasional sermons, which evince the various exertions of his mind in the cause of truth, and the high estimation in which his labours were held.

DR. EDMUND CALAMY.

This eminent writer on the subject of dissent was born in London on the fifth of April, 1671, and descended from a father and grandfather of the same name, the former of whom was ejected from the parish of Moreton, in Essex, and the latter from the living of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, London. He was placed at Merchant-Taylors' school, and obtained peculiar esteem from Mr. Hartcliffe, the master. He afterwards went to the academy of Mr. Samuel Cradock, at Wickham Brook, in Suffolk, where he procured, by his talents and worth, the esteem of several who afterwards rose to the highest posts in the establishment. When he was about seventeen years of age he removed to the university of Utrecht, and studied under the celebrated professors De Uries and Grævius. His application to learning was so eager that he made it a rule to spend a whole night every week in his study. When Principal Carstairs was sent into Holland in quest of a person to fill a professor's chair in the University of Edinburgh, the repu-

tation of Dr. Calamy induced him to press his acceptance of the office. But he declined it, and soon after returned to England with recommendatory letters from Grævius to Dr. Pocock, professor of Hebrew; and Dr. Bernard Savilian, professor of astronomy, by whose means he obtained leave to pursue his studies in the Bodleian library.

After studying the controversy between the non-conformists and the establishment, he determined to enter on the ministry among the dissenters, and frequently preached in the meeting-house at Oxford, and in the villages around that city. In the year 1672 he was invited to assist Mr. Matthew Sylvester, minister of a presbyterian congregation in Blackfriars, London; and two years after was ordained, with several others, at Little St. Helens. He was soon after chosen to assist Dr. Williams, and elected one of the Tuesday lecturers at Salter's-hall. Mr. Vincent Alsop being removed by death from the congregation in Westminster, Dr. Calamy was, in 1703, called to succeed him. Here he saw, among his hearers, persons of high rank, to whom he delivered the truths of the Gospel with much ardour and fidelity. The success of his labours rendered it necessary to build a larger place of worship; but the influence of religion among the great was not such as to prevent his congregation from becoming gradually, like most others among dissenters, an assembly of tradesmen.

His reputation as a preacher called him forth on many public occasions, and the publications which he sent forth from the press induced several distinguished persons in Scotland to invite him to that country, which he visited in 1709. He was received

with the highest marks of respect and esteem, and was honoured by the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, with the degree of doctor in divinity. But the zeal and ability which endeared him to the dissenters, whose cause he pleaded, was accompanied with so much kindness and catholicism, that he was held in high esteem by many who were admirers of the episcopal establishment. For this, indeed, the writer of the London manuscript seems to blame him, observing, "that he warmly opposes those whom he terms narrow souls; and wherever his diocese reaches, encourages persons of great latitude." Many eminent men in different communions bewailed his death, which happened on the third of June, 1732, in the sixty-first year of his age. His character may, in a great measure, be learned from his works, which were numerous and are well known.

He published, in 1702, "an Abridgment of Richard Baxter's History of his Life and Times," with some additions, and "an Apology for the Nonconformists." Shortly after, he answered Dr. Hoadly in a work, entitled, "a Defence of moderate Nonconformity;" of which, in a little time, he published a second part, which was, by so good a judge as Locke, pronounced unanswerable. His "Nonconformist Memorial," containing notices of the two thousand ejected ministers, has been of course attacked by zealous conformists, but only to prove that for such a mass of names and dates, it possesses more accuracy and truth than could reasonably have been expected. Rich in agreeable and improving information, it possesses, beyond almost any other uninspired volume, a tendency to produce the heroic disposition of Moses

to choose sufferings with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

His pen was not devoted solely to the cause of nonconformity, but was often employed to recommend the doctrines or duties of religion. He published, in 1722, thirteen sermons on the doctrine of the Trinity, which was dedicated to the king, who received it very favourably, and ordered the author to be presented with a donation of fifty pounds. The life of Mr. Howe, which was prefixed to the folio edition of his works, and also published separately, was written by Dr. Calamy. The numerous single sermons which he printed, evinced his solicitude for the interests of religion, unconnected with the peculiar tenets of any denomination. He also left behind him a manuscript, consisting of three volumes, folio, entitled, "a Historical Account of my own Life, with some Reflections on the Times I have lived in."

SIMON BROWN.

The most interesting character that ever appeared among mortals was he who combined infinite greatness and worth with unparalleled affliction. If it would not be bringing too near together things which, in themselves, are so far removed, it might also be observed, that the blindness of Milton may have contributed not only to the sublimity of his genius, as it certainly does to the touching pathos of some of his lines, but may also have aided his celebrity by the affectionate sympathy which men feel with afflicted greatness.

The subject of the present memoir was distinguished for his talents, but was even still more inte-

resting by the singularity of his afflictions. He was born in 1680, at Shepton Mallet, in Somersetshire. He early became an accomplished scholar, and began to preach before he was twenty years of age. His first pastoral charge was at Portsmouth, where, at that time, a numerous congregation of dissenters maintained the doctrines of the cross; but he removed to London in 1716, and became pastor of the church in the Old Jewry, which highly esteemed his character, and flourished under his care. The death of his wife and only son, in 1722, gave such a shock to his exquisite sensibility, that it has been considered as the cause of his severe visitation, for which, however, a different reason has been assigned. A complete mental derangement, at first, discovered all the violent symptoms of distraction, but afterwards settled down into a most peculiar species of melancholy. He not only abandoned for ever the labours of the ministry, but obstinately refused, even when he appeared rational, to join in any exercise of devotion, whether public or private. After his afflicted friends had long urged him to tell the reason of a conduct so contrary to his former dispositions, he reluctantly informed them that he had fallen under the peculiar displeasure of God; who had caused his rational soul gradually to perish, and left him only an animal life, like that of the brutes; that though he retained the human shape, and a faculty of speaking in a manner which appeared to others rational, yet he had all the while no more notion of what he said than a parrot; that it would, therefore, be profane in him to pray, and incongruous to be present at the prayers of others. Viewing himself as divested of a human soul, he conceived that he was no longer a moral agent, the

proper subject of either reward or punishment, and persisted in this strain of thought and conversation till death dispelled the illusion.

After waiting two years, the congregation at the Old Jury, having lost all hopes of his recovery, chose Mr. Samuel Chandler to his vacant charge. But they contributed three hundred pounds to aid the fortune with which Mr. Brown retired to Shepton Mallet. Here he lived seven years, clinging to his melancholy persuasion of being a mere brute in human form, while he displayed not merely a rational soul, but one of a superior order, by various works of taste, learning, and argument. For his own amusement, he translated the Greek and Latin poets into English verse, in which he has been followed by Cowper, a brother in affliction, though a far greater poet; he wrote books for the education of children, and collected the *themata* of the Greek and Latin tongues to facilitate the knowledge of the classics. But he chastised the abuse of reason in others, as well as proved its vigorous existence in himself, by two works in defence of Christianity against the deists. The year before he died, he answered "Woolston's fifth Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour," in a work, entitled, "A fit Rebuke for a ludicrous Infidel, with a preface concerning the prosecution of such writers by the civil power." This answer is deemed equal to any which Woolston received, and a fine exemplification of the inspired precept, answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit. The preface forms an excellent apology for the freedom of the press. His life was as useful as it was melancholy to the last, for in the year in which he died he produced his book against Tindal, entitled "a Defence of the Re-

ligion of Nature and the Christian Revelation, against the defective Account of the one and the Exceptions against the other," in a book entitled, "Christianity as old as the Creation." The deistical controversy is said to have produced nothing superior to this volume which was dedicated to queen Caroline, in such an address as his friends deemed necessary to suppress, lest it should prevent the success of the work. But Dr. William Harris, who edited these two last works, recommended in an advertisement the case of the author, under a deep and peculiar melancholy, to the compassion and prayers of every serious Christian.

Disliking to be seen, he obstinately refused to take air or exercise, till his sedentary habits produced mortification which terminated his sufferings at the close of the year 1753, when he was about fifty-two years of age. He left several daughters who were consoled by observing that at the close of life, he not only consented to allow, but even requested prayers to be offered up for him. Might not the useful and religious employment of his disordered powers, in his last works against the deists, have contributed to this happy change? And is it not to be regretted, that Brown and Cowper, while under such an awful cloud, each of them trembling at the rebukes of the Almighty, should have spent the remnants of their intellects on such pages as those of Homer? Before his illness, Mr. Brown published a volume of occasional sermons and another of hymns and spiritual songs, with a very sensible preface, in which he prudently disavows all intention of rivalling the sacred muse of Dr. Watts.

DR. HARRIS.

William Harris appears to have been born in London, about the year 1675. In youth he was a member, together with Dr. Grosvenor, of a society of young men, who met once a week for prayer and religious conversation. It is conjectured that he studied under Mr. Timothy Jollie, at Attercliffe, but it is certain that he was well taught in the learned languages, theology, and philosophy. Though extremely diffident, he entered the pulpit when very young, and was soon invited to succeed Mr. Timothy Cruso, at Crutched Friars. His friends were happy to succeed in conquering his reluctance to undertake this charge. Before his ordination, he locked himself into the place where he was to preach, and spent there a whole day in fasting and prayer, for the divine blessing on his future labours. The same modesty and seriousness, which he displayed in entering on the work, induced him to prepare with conscientious diligence for the pulpit, in which he always appeared as "a scribe well instructed, rightly dividing the word of truth." He was one of those who preached the lecture on Friday evenings at the Weigh-house, to encourage psalmody, and on the death of Mr. Tong, was chosen to be lecturer at Salter's-hall. The alarm of popery having induced the dissenting ministers to preach against the principal doctrines of the church of Rome, he delivered a discourse against transubstantiation.

The unwearied tenour of his life admits of little narrative, though he laboured as a faithful pastor for forty-two years, at the end of which period, an illness of a few days removed him to the abode of the blessed, on the twenty-fifth of May, 1740, when he was sixty-five years of age. Dr. Grosvenor preached

his funeral sermon with all the ardour of friendship. He ranks him among those who have embellished our language, of which he was deemed the greatest master of any writer among the dissenters. We should rather adopt the decision of Doddridge, "that his style is plain and easy, his thoughts substantial, but seldom striking or uncommon ; nothing to blame, nor very much to admire." His volume of " practical Discourses on the principal Representations of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament" has been praised by Dr. Watts and many competent judges. The works which he published amount to near forty, but chiefly consist of sermons, except the notes on the epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, which pass under the name of Matthew Henry, being written to complete his commentary ; " A practical Illustration of the book of Esther," and the prefaces of some works of Nathaniel Taylor, Dr. Manton, and Mr. Howe which he edited. He set a high value upon biblical criticism, and made a valuable collection of such authors as wrote on the sacred Scriptures, which he bequeathed by will to Dr. Williams' library. His private life was as exemplary as his personal devotion would lead us to expect ; for he was scarcely ever seen angry, or heard to speak to any one's disadvantage. Eminently benevolent in relieving the necessitous, and promoting the interests of religion in all within his reach, he left behind him an example worthy of universal imitation.

DANIEL NEAL.

The first historian of those who dissented from the establishment of our country, deserves honourable mention from those who succeed him in his historic

labours. Born in London, December 14, 1678, he was, in that stormy period, left, while very young, an orphan under the care of his maternal uncle, who was often gratefully acknowledged to have supplied a parent's place. At the age of eight years, he studied at Merchant-Taylors' school, where he refused the proffered exhibition to a college, which he had earned by his assiduity, in order to take his lot among the dissenters. He was near twenty when he removed to the academy of Mr. Thomas Rowe, and after three years, went to the continent to study at the universities of Utrecht and Leyden. Returning to England, in 1703, in company with the celebrated Lardner, he was soon chosen assistant to Dr. John Singleton, pastor of a church in Aldersgate-street, London, whom he succeeded three years after, on the death of that gentleman. For thirty-six years, he laboured, not only in the pulpit, but in the parlour and the study, for the welfare of this flock, which so increased under his care, that they were obliged to remove to a larger edifice in Jewin-street.

Of the many hours which he spent in his study, some were devoted to history connected with the subject of dissent, of which he was an ardent patron. This produced, in 1720, "the History of New England, being an impartial Account of the civil and ecclesiastical Affairs of the Country," in two volumes octavo. America rewarded him soon after with the degree of A. M. the highest which her colleges could confer. During the same year he defended the dissenters from the reflections cast on them by Dr. Hare, dean of Worcester, in his visitation sermon entitled, "Church Authority vindicated."

He next stepped forward to recommended to the

world the practice of inoculation for the small-pox, which, being a novelty, was opposed by hosts of prejudices, but by none so formidable as that which represented it as contrary to religion, and suggested that the devil inoculated Job with this disease. Mr. Neal published a narrative of the method and success of inoculating for the small-pox in New England, which introduced him to Caroline, princess of Wales, whom he found in her closet reading "Fox's Martyrology." After discussing the merits of the new discovery, so interesting to a mother, they conversed on the state of the dissenters both in Britain and New England. On the entrance of the prince, who joined their conversation, he was admitted to the honour of kissing hands. The children of the royal family soon after received inoculation, which was adopted by the nobility, and from England was introduced into Germany.

Mr. Neal published, in 1732, the first volume of his "History of the Puritans." Dr. John Evans had laboured in preparing for the work, which he was to have brought down to the year 1640; but, at his death, the whole devolved on our historian. A second volume, in the following year, evinced his diligence; and he completed the work by a fourth volume in 1738. The praises of dissenters were not his only reward. The censures of Dr. Maddox, bishop of St. Asaph, afforded him an opportunity of establishing his credit for temper in controversy, as well as veracity in history.

In two popular lectures among the dissenters, one at Berry-street, on the principal doctrines and duties of Christianity, and the other at Salter's-hall against *Popery*, Mr. Neal took a part. But at length he fell,

like many other studious men, a martyr to excessive confinement and mental exertion; for, after much indisposition, attended with great pains in his head, and depression of spirits, repeated strokes of palsy removed him to a world, where "there shall be no more pain," April 4, 1743, in the sixty-fifth year of his age.

In his own family, his benevolent and devotional spirit has rendered his memory grateful and salutary to children's children. To his congregation he was dear as a faithful instructor, who, after forty years labours among them, was far from lingering upon a field which he could no longer cultivate; but sought to perpetuate his usefulness by providing a suitable successor. The dissenting churches valued him, not only as their historian, but for his able and manly assertion of their religious rights and privileges. His usefulness among them is said to have been impeded by withdrawing from those who subscribed to the doctrine of the Trinity¹; but to every one who asked him, he gave the most satisfactory assurances of his agreement with the subscribers in that important truth. He was, however, too deeply diseased with the epidemic of that generation which succeeded the last of the nonconformist ministers, a want of that vigorous tension of mind and heart, which should give striking evangelical precision to pastoral instruction, and rouse the languid feelings of men to a due solicitude for their eternal interests.

The basis of Mr. Neal's celebrity is "the History of the Puritans." This important desideratum he supplied with laborious diligence, and though his

¹ MS. Penes nos.

impartiality has been impeached by great names, their reputation has suffered more than his own by the scrutiny.

Besides the History of New England, 2 vols. 8vo. 1720, and the History of the Puritans, in four volumes, he published several minor works, chiefly sermons.

DR. SAMUEL WRIGHT.

Dr. Wright, who was born January the third, 1683, was the eldest son of the Rev. James Wright, of Retford, in Nottinghamshire, but, losing both his parents when very young, he was educated under the care of his grandmother and maternal uncle. He studied for the ministry under Mr. Jollie, where the religious impressions, which he had received very early, were revived and happily terminated in an effectual change of heart. Having finished his studies, he became chaplain in several distinguished families, of which the last was that of lady Susanna Lost, at Turnham-green, near London. Invited to assist Dr. Grosvenor, in Crosby-square, he resigned his other employments, and soon added to his labours, in conjunction with the doctor, an evening lecture on the Lord's-day, at St. Thomas', Southwark. The great pains, which he took in preparing for the pulpit, attracted many hearers, and soon opened to him a more important sphere of usefulness; for on the death of Mr. Matthew Silvester, he was, in 1707, chosen pastor of the vacant church in Blackfriars. The society, which he found very small, so increased under his ministry, that they were obliged more than once to enlarge their place of

worship, and at last were enabled to erect a very superior building in Carter-lane. For thirty-eight years, he preached here to a numerous, serious, and affectionate audience; while, from among the crowds who were attracted by his eloquence, considerable additions were constantly made to the church. Shortly after his settlement at Blackfriars, he married the widow of his predecessor, who was grand-daughter of Mr. George Hughes, of Plymouth, by whom he had one daughter. He was chosen one of the lecturers at Salter's-hall and at Little St. Helens.

In the arian controversy he refused to subscribe to any declaration of faith; for he was an empassioned friend of liberty, which induced him to take a part in the periodical work, entitled, "the Occasional Paper." His abhorrence of high church and tory principles, was perhaps inflamed by the injury which he received from Sacheverel's mob, who, in 1709, gutted, according to their favourite phrase and practice, his meeting-house in Blackfriars. As a testimony of the esteem entertained for his learning and abilities, he received from Scotland the diploma of D. D. The London manuscript observes, that "the doctor's assistant, Mr. Newman, being far gone in arminianism, and he a zealous calvinist, the sermon in the afternoon contradicts that in the morning." But Dr. Wright was more attached to the presbyterian discipline, and opposed to his congregational brethren than his calvinistic creed would have induced any one to suppose.

In the midst of health he used often to say, he could with as much composure die at the command of God, as he could lie down at night; and in his last illness was often heard to say, "O that thou

wouldest give thy servant leave to die ! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." He obtained his wish, April 3, 1746, aged sixty-four. He was so much admired as a preacher, that it is said, Dr. Herring, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, frequently went to hear him, to learn from him a just elocution. He also excelled to a high degree in prayer. He was censured for being haughty, but was exceedingly liberal to the poor, and a flame of fire in the cause of religion. He printed thirty-seven single sermons at the importunate request of those who had heard them preached. His practical works are in the highest degree important and useful, fully answering the noble ambition which he expressed in the preface to his "Treatise on the Deceitfulness of Sin." "I had rather be the author of the small book that shall be instrumental to save a soul from sin and death than of the finest piece of science and literature in the world that tends only to accomplish men for the present state of being." Dr. Doddridge says "his treatise on being born again, is one of the most useful published in that age." "His book, entitled, 'Self Possession,' is one of the best pieces of Christian philosophy that ever was printed, and his 'Great Concern' is much preferable to 'the whole Duty of Man.'"

His charity was conducted upon rule ; for which purpose he kept a purse in which was found this remarkable memorandum. "Something from all the money I receive to be put into this purse for charitable uses.—From my salary as minister, which is uncertain, a tenth part—from occasional and extraordinary gifts, which are more uncertain, a twentieth part—from copy money of things I print, and interest of my estate, a seventh part." Wilson's History of Dissenting Churches in London.

ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

The eminent divines, whom we have hitherto recorded, were known only by their theological productions, and within the enclosure of the church of Christ ; but we now mention a name familiar to the literary world, as a poet, metaphysician, teacher of logic, and cultivator of elegant literature. If the subjects of any former memoir were conspicuous on the stage of the world, they had been educated in an university, and adopted by an establishment ; but dissenters claim Watts as exclusively their own, while his celebrity was the pure result of his talents, which could be concealed by no obscurity of station. Whether his excursions into the fields of general science were injurious, or favourable, to the paramount interests of religion, will be a subject for future consideration.

Isaac Watts was born July 17, 1674, at Southampton, where his father kept an academy. As Mr. Watts was deacon of the dissenting church, it is probable, that his eminent attachment to the principles of nonconformity drew upon him the fury of the storm which then raged, for he was immured in prison. The mother of the celebrated divine, who inherited the heroism of many of the female puritans, evinced her attachment to her injured partner, by sitting on a stone near the prison door, suckling her Isaac, the child of promise and of gladness. In him heaven repaid their sufferings on account of the Gospel, for his father, who died in 1736, in a good old age, “enjoyed the happiness indulged to few, of living to see his son eminent for literature, and venerable for

piety." His mother, who was accustomed to excite the poetic exertions of her husband's scholars, after school hours, by the promise of a farthing, received the first indication of her son's genius in the following couplet:—

" I write not for a farthing, but to try
How I your farthing writers can outvie."

At four years of age, he began to learn Latin, and at seven, he composed hymns. He was early placed with Mr. Pinhorne, a clergyman, who was master of the free-school at Southampton, under whom he studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew with so much success, that he became the idol of the tutor, whose praises he has handed down to posterity in an elegant Latin ode. It is not surprising that Dr. Speed, a physician, and other friends at Southampton, should offer to support at the university this child of genius; but that a youth so flattered should resist the temptation of the prospects which were opened to him, and declare his resolution to take his lot among the persecuted nonconformists, was a triumph of principle, which demands the admiration of those who may differ from him in judgment. "Such he was," says Dr. Johnson, "as every Christian church would rejoice to have adopted."

At the age of sixteen, he went to the seminary of Mr. Rowe. Here he was, for his exemplary conduct proposed to the students as an object of pious imitation, and his successful diligence in theological and scientific pursuits, as well as in sacred poetry, furnished a stimulus to the companions of his studies, among whom he reckoned Hughes the poet, and Dr. Leck, archbishop of Tuam. The pure and humble

spirit of religion, which too many have lost in the ardour of study, he retained undiminished, and at the age of nineteen, entered into the communion of the church of which Mr. Rowe was pastor. He soon after retired, for two years, to his father's house at Southampton, where, on complaining of the psalms sung by the dissenters, his father desired him to try if he could compose better. The success of his first attempt produced a request for more, till, before he was two and twenty, he had composed a volume, which has furnished thousands of private Christians with exquisite pleasure and improvement, and rendered this part of worship among dissenters superior to any thing before known in the Christian church.

From the paternal roof he removed to Stoke Newington, near London, to reside with sir John Hartopp, as tutor to his son. During his residence here, which was of five years continuance, he preached, in 1698, his first sermon on his birth-day, when he completed his twenty-fourth year. This first entrance into the pulpit was immediately followed by his election to the office of assistant to Dr. Chauncey, pastor of the independent church which then met in Mark-lane, but afterwards in Berry-street, whom he succeeded in the pastoral office on the same day in which king William died. His infirm health soon called for the assistant labours of Mr. Samuel Price, and when the increase of his disorder laid him aside from public labours for four years, sir Thomas Abney invited him to his house, where he was soothed by the most respectful and affectionate attentions for six and thirty years. He was frequently obliged to retire to bed in a dark room after preaching, and often unable to preach at all; but he endeavoured to benefit his flock by

publishing sermons for their use. By this means his literary reputation soon spread beyond his own country, and produced him the acquaintance of learned foreigners, as well as the diploma of D. D. from the universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. As he advanced in years, his increasing infirmities more intirely incapacitated him for the duties of the pastoral office, which he would, with its emoluments, have resigned, but his flock refused in a delicate and generous manner to accept his resignation.

He was, indeed, such a pastor, as a Christian church should highly prize. His zeal for the Redeemer's glory preferred the office of a minister of the Gospel to every other under heaven, and preserved him from the sin of many who, without his literary eminence, suffering their hearts to be divided between Zion and Helicon, the reveries of Plato and the Oracles of God, fall far below the usefulness of the rude, unlettered preacher, whose whole soul is in the work. Watts brought into the sanctuary a taste undebauched by the blandishments of profane literature, and could say to his charge, "there is no place, no company, nor employment under heaven, that can give me such delight, as when I stand ministering holy things in the midst of you." In the same spirit he used to say, "I would rather have been the author of Baxter's Call to the unconverted, than of the Paradise Lost." The catechisms he composed for children, the attention he paid to private pastoral duties, as far as his debility would permit, the fidelity with which he declared the whole counsel of God, gave him an indisputable claim to the character of a good steward of the mysteries of God. The disorder on his nerves, which impeded the labours of his life,

was peculiarly trying to his ardent mind which panted for usefulness, and dictated many a pathetic verse, in which he expostulates with his soul under the pressure of his disease and the dread of unprofitableness. This melancholy state of debility, which he attributes in great measure to midnight studies, has been said to have produced effects bordering on insanity; but the story, however current, is contradicted by the decided testimony of his biographer, to which is added that of Dr. Watts' amanuensis, who was with him at all times, and the declarations of sir Thomas Abney's family. At length, however, he escaped from his accumulated infirmities by a peaceful death on the twenty-fifth of November, 1748, in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

The estimate of his character as a Christian, a divine, and a poet might claim more space than this work could afford. The personal religion which breathes in his psalms and hymns, has produced in many an eminent Christian the blush of conscious inferiority; while the ascendancy of the devotional spirit, amidst the abstractions of metaphysics, the cold discussions of logic, or the reveries of poetry, has given to every thing he touched a tinge of piety, and induced Dr. Johnson to say, "he converted philosophy to a handmaid of religion." He was not, however, without imperfections. Among these, it will scarcely be our duty to mention his natural propensity to anger, since religion so completely triumphed over it, as to render him habitually meek and forgiving. But it was his unhappiness to be enamoured of his own discoveries, so that he cherished, with vanity unperceived by himself, certain theological tenets, not because they were true, but because they were novel and his own. Yet the tale, which

has been industriously circulated of his abandoning the orthodox creed at the close of life, may be confuted by the best testimonies. In a letter written when he was advanced beyond his seventieth year, he praises Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," pronounces the highest eulogiums on the author, as "a hearty believer of the great doctrines of the reformed church" (which being addressed to a clergyman on the continent, must mean the calvinistic church), and closes by declaring, "if Providence would permit me to commit a second part of my life and usefulness to any man, Dr. Doddridge should be the man." A few months before his death, he said to a friend, "I remember an aged minister used to observe, that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the Gospel for their support as the unlearned, and so I find it." Dr. Gibbons says, "about the same time I came into his study, found him alone, and sat down for conversation. With high pleasure he spake of the Scripture method of salvation: not a word did he say of what he had been, or done in life, but his soul seemed to be swallowed up with gratitude and joy for the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ." "I visited the doctor on his death-bed, when to my inquiry how it was with his soul, he replied, 'all' was comfortable there.'" From the sentiments of the persons who were around him to the last, and the testimony they have given to the continuance of the same state of mind in which they had ever known him, it is evident that no change had taken place in his views with regard to the great foundation of his eternal hopes.

As a divine, Dr. Watts appears to most advantage

in his sermons ; for his treatises on theology are not always equal to his fame. But he was prevented from attaining the highest excellence in any one department, by dividing his powers in many different pursuits. On some theological questions, he seems disposed to talk, where he has but little to say, and to grapple with difficulties of which he has no solution to offer. The subject of liberty and necessity, that *crux theologorum*, he meets like a general unable to fight, and unwilling to retreat ; so that adopting a middle course, he encounters the difficulties of both the opposing systems, without the advantages of either ; maintaining that where the understanding is able to decide, it guides the will, which, in all other cases, and these are supposed to be numerous, is left to determine itself. The feeble manner in which he has handled this mighty question, increases our admiration of the gigantic powers displayed by president Edwards, in his "Treatise on the Freedom of the Will." In his "Ruin and Recovery of Mankind," Watts has indeed formed a rare union of prudence and boldness, and given the outlines of a scheme which, in all its essential parts, harmonizes with the sacred Scriptures, and is armed at every point against the attacks of infidelity. His writings on the Trinity establish that important doctrine on its true basis—divine revelation, though they betray a propensity to speculate upon the *modus* of the Trinity, against which he had himself wisely protested. This tendency to philosophise upon matters of pure revelation, forms, indeed, the chief fault in the doctor's writings, and may be traced to his connection with the philosophers and literati of the day, whose suffrage to his sentiments he was desirous

to gain. Like a true poet, he shines most in works of imagination, as his discourses on the future state will testify; but as an eminent Christian, all his works show that his imagination was his servant and not his master. That he should have excelled also in the opposite department of logic is no common praise, nor should we omit to mention, that his treatise on that subject was employed as the text book at the universities. The style of Watts is praised by Dr. Johnson at the expense of all his predecessors among the dissenters; but that eminent critic was not aware that Howe and Bates had long before furnished the dissenters with more elegant sentences than are to be found in the works of the poet; and that Grosvenor, the cotemporary of Watts, surpassed him in the charms of pulpit eloquence.

It is, however, as a poet, that Dr. Watts is most generally known and admired; for he unquestionably was the Coryphæus, who led the way to the modern excellence of sacred poetry. If the imitation, to which he furnished the incitement, may have produced single pieces superior to any of his own, his psalms and hymns, as a whole, are yet without an equal or a second. Many of his psalms, however, are beneath him, and induce the reader of the English prose version, much more the admirer of the Hebrew poetry, to long for something less inferior to the sweet singer of Israel. Yet in other psalms, Watts has scarcely left us any thing further to desire; for his versions of the fifty-first are the language of repentance incarnate. His Lyric poems shew what he could have done, had he, like Pope, lived only for poetry and fame; and his hymns for children, which have a more extensive sale than any other work in the English language, have

brought down the sublime truths of religion to millions of infant minds, and inspired them with the earliest attachment to the best of beings^t.

DR. DODDRIDGE.

Philip Doddridge has a double claim upon our notice, as an eminent minister of the Gospel, and as a distinguished tutor, the guide of the studies of many who afterwards adorned the ministry of the Gospel, or ranked among the literati of their day. He was born in London, June 26, 1702, of parents who could trace up their pedigree to the great; but preferred the honour of descent from the confessors for Christ. This son was at his birth laid out for dead, but one of the attendants, thinking she perceived some motion, cherished the vital flame, which was destined to be a burning and shining light. His parents, who had not degenerated from the piety of their forefathers, were anxious to transmit the inestimable inheritance to their child, who soon learned the Scripture history from his mother's lectures on the Dutch tiles in the fire-place, and received from her lips indelible impressions of religion. Deprived of them both, at a time when the loss was most severe, he was placed at a school, which his maternal grandfather had formerly taught, and in 1715 went to St. Albans, to be under the tuition of Mr. Nathaniel Wood. A kind providence seemed to direct him hither, to find a second father; for Dr. Samuel Clark, the dissenting minister, hearing that the person to whom the patrimony of young Doddridge was entrusted, had dissipated his own property

^t Dr. Gibbons' Life of Watts.

and that of his ward, most generously undertook to support him during his education.

Into the communion of the church under the pastoral care of his patron and friend he was admitted February 1, 1718, on which he made in his diary some very serious reflections. The same year he retired to the house of his sister, to consider of his future course in life. The dutchess of Bedford, having by means of some family connections become acquainted with his character and circumstances, kindly offered to support him at the university, if he chose to be educated for the church; but as the voice of conscience forbid him to avail himself of her benevolence, he waited on Dr. Edmund Calamy to beg his advice and assistance in entering on the ministry among dissenters, in which, however, he received from him no encouragement. He made the best improvement of the disappointment, and having shortly after received an advantageous offer of an introduction into the profession of the law, he devoted one morning to ask counsel of heaven, when, in the midst of his prayers, the postman brought a letter from Dr. Clark, offering to assist him in entering into the ministry among dissenters. "This I looked upon," he says, "almost as an answer from heaven."

After a short, but instructive residence with his patron, he went to the academy of Mr. John Jennings. He entered on his public labours July 22, 1722, when he was just twenty years of age, and preached his first sermon at Hinckley, from the apostolic sentence, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." He was afterwards much encouraged and affected, on learning that this first essay was rendered the means of conversion to two persons.

Though invited to a superior situation at Coventry, he modestly preferred to settle at Kibworth, a village where he might at once teach and learn. "His favourite authors (says Orton) were Tillotson, Baxter, and Howe." To some of these we may trace the excellencies of Doddridge as a preacher, to others his faults as a divine. There were, indeed, at this period, several things in his religion to which, in a more detailed review, we should think it our duty to object; while his diary discloses a conscientious inspection of his own heart, his studies and his labours in the ministry, which would lead a candid censor to augur, with pleasing confidence, the final excellence of his character both as a Christian and a minister.

In October, 1725, to enjoy the company of the invaluable Mr. David Some, minister of Market Harborough, he removed to that town, but continued to preach at Kibworth, till 1729, when he became assistant to Mr. Some, and preached alternately at both places. This was a change highly advantageous to Doddridge; for he found in his colleague "all the goodness he could have expected from a father, and received from him greater assistance than from any person, except Dr. Clark, in the affair of his education; for Mr. Some was one of the brightest ornaments of the Gospel and the ministry which the age produced."

While in this retired situation, the report of his eminent worth brought him several invitations to settle in London, Nottingham, and other places of superior importance; but he resisted them all, and was not induced to extend the sphere of his labours, till he was advised to enter upon the work of tutor to a seminary for the ministry. To this Mr. Jennings

had led the way ; for he had often urged him to keep in view the improvement of his academical lectures, and to study in such a manner as to enrich them. Doddridge did not then suspect, what he afterwards learned, that Mr. Jennings pronounced him the most likely person to perfect the schemes which eight years employed in the work of a tutor, had allowed him only to commence. Perhaps it was under the same secret influence that Doddridge had been induced to draw up a plan of education for the ministry which, when shewn to Dr. Watts, induced him and other friends to solicit the author to put it into execution. He commenced the labours of this important office at Harborough, in the summer of the year 1729, with only two or three students, as his diffidence would not admit of more. But in the following year, he was induced to accede to the repeated invitations of the church at Northampton, to become their pastor, and was ordained on the nineteenth of March. His secret devotions on this, as on every other important occasion, Orton has very properly transcribed from his diary, and thus at once placed Doddridge high in the esteem of every friend to the devotion of the heart, and rendered his memoirs one of the most edifying books in the English language. Here we behold that watchful care of his own religion ; that laborious attention to the persons, characters, and states of all in his congregation ; that conscientious adoption of subjects and manner of preaching ; that affectionate regard to the young of his flock ; that diligence in pastoral visits ; that fidelity in the exercise of Christian discipline ; that enlarged solicitude for the interests of religion, not merely in neighbouring towns and villages, but in the whole kingdom,

which render him an admirable model for a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

His reputation as a tutor drew considerable numbers to his seminary. His assistants were respectable scholars, and some of them eminent in the literary world ; as the names of Job Orton, Dr. Aikin and Robertson, professor of oriental literature in the university of Edinburgh, will sufficiently evince. Some of our readers may learn with surprize, that not much more than half the number of his students became ministers ; but some who were designed for the ministry died while in their studies, and several gentleman's sons went to prepare themselves, as in a college, for any situation to which they might be called. Orton attributes to this latter circumstance some evils in the academy, which he says Doddridge himself lamented and wished to rectify : but Kippis is of a different opinion. The true source of the evils, indeed, was not the intermixture of persons intended for different professions, but the admission of young men who were destitute of the grace of God ; for though there is no infection in laymen there is in unregenerate sinners, and when these become ministers, there is no pest equally deadly.

This inattention to the genuine religion of the youths, which we should call the original sin of the institution, poisoned Doddridge's lectures ; for they seem to proceed too much on the idea that the mind of the student was a perfect *tabula rasa*, destitute of sentiments or prepossessions. Had this been the case, we could not approve of the tutors furnishing them with the wrong as well as the right in theology, error as well as truth, and then calling them to make their election. If such conduct be defended under

the name of liberality, would it not be still more liberal, to admit persons who were yet speculating whether Christianity, deism, or atheism was most consistent with truth? But if the advocates for the spurious liberality, which perverted the seminary at Northampton, deem it proper to require that a candidate for the Christian ministry, should himself be a Christian, the question then recurs what constitutes a Christian; and each one is justified in requiring a profession of those sentiments and that change which he deems essential to real Christianity. In fact, if there is no essential difference in sentiments, and truth is not important, free inquiry is worthless; and when truth is regarded as essential to religion, error must be viewed as impious and fatal, which leaves no other way to combine the interests of liberality and piety, but that each communion should form ministers of their own sentiments, and leave to those who differ from them the same liberty. The plan which Dr. Kippis applauds, as forming the glory of Doddridge's seminary, to receive young men without sentiments, to give opposite doctrines an equal chance, and then send forth some to preach Calvinism and others socinianism is liberality in a state of derangement.

His lectures have a tendency to generate a controversial spirit. The disproportionate attention paid to the evidences of Christianity, which push the doctrines of the Gospel into a corner, is a capital fault; for the most effectual method of proving the truth of the Christian religion is to shew what that religion is, which whenever a man truly understands convinces him that it is divine.

In 1730, Doddridge married a lady of Worcester, who was the solace of all his future days, and found

in him such a friend, that it would be difficult to conceive of higher conjugal felicity than they enjoyed. Six years after his marriage and settlement at Northampton, he received, from the Marischal college, Aberdeen, the diploma of D. D. The diligence with which he laboured for many years is sufficiently attested by the various duties which he fulfilled, and the numerous works he published ; but at length his honourable course was arrested, when his friends hoped that he was yet in the midst of his race. He went, in 1750, to St. Albans, to preach a funeral sermon for his friend and father Dr. Clark, when he caught a cold which brought him to the grave. Though his physicians and friends advised him to desist from preaching, for the recovery of his health ; they observed that his increasing ardour of religion rendered him indifferent to the alarms of disease, and gave indications of approaching glory. " He seemed to be above the world," says Orton, " and was daily breathing after immortality." To his friends, he wrote, " I bless God earth is less and less to me, and I shall be very glad to have done with it, as soon as my Master shall give me leave." His last services in the church of Northampton, were like the words of a herald of mercy returning to him that sent him. While he was spending a few weeks at Shrewsbury, he received a letter from some friends in London, filled with such eloquent expressions of affectionate esteem for his character, and sorrow in the prospect of his departure, that it was apprehended he would have sunk under the impressions it produced.

Having tried in vain the Hot Wells, near Bristol, he was prevailed on to undertake a voyage to Lisbon. He at first hesitated, on account of the expense,

which his disinterested course of life had left him unable to bear; but the God whom he had served, to the neglect of all mercenary pursuits, kindly appeared for him, by raising up friends in the time of need. On the voyage, he said to Mrs. Doddridge, "I cannot express to you what a morning I have had. Such delightful and transporting views of the heavenly world is my Father now indulging me with, as no words can express." At his first arrival, the air of Lisbon produced a transient gleam of hope, which again vanished, and on the twenty-first, of October, 1751, he reached the haven for which he sighed, in the fiftieth year of his age.

That a man who lived no longer should have done so much, is a sufficient proof of that diligent improvement of his talents, which was his characteristic excellence. This has been said to be shaded by a propensity to tell of the bustle in which he lived. Yet we are disposed to attribute the fault to a more amiable cause than vanity; for the benevolence of his heart refused to avail itself of the privileges of a great man, by openly resisting the demands which were often made upon his time; so that he had no other resource than frequently to display the multiplicity of his engagements. As a man, he cannot be said to have been endued with genius in the highest sense, nor was his learning very profound, though it was extensive, rendering him respectable rather than eminent. Upon the whole he may be pronounced one of those who have made the most of themselves, in the best sense, raising their talents by faithful improvement to the first rank of usefulness. As a Christian, he held such intercourse with God, as is not only incompatible with unfaithfulness in the mi-

nister, but rendered the preacher the delight of the zealous, and exposed him to the censure of the lukewarm. He was the soul of every association for religious purposes in the country where he resided; for his heart was too large to be confined to Northampton. He was not equally excellent as a divine; for a mistaken candour often destroyed precision of sentiment, and energy of expression. The bias of his own soul, however, was decidedly towards evangelical truth, and though Dr. Kippis praises his early sermons, as less calvinistic than his latter productions. Doddridge himself said, if ever he had been supposed to lean towards heterodox sentiments, it was between the years 1723 and 1730. To us it affords pleasure to reflect, that he was more evangelical and calvinistic as he advanced in years; and the regret which some have expressed at his orthodoxy, will serve to reconcile others to what they had blamed as not sufficiently decided. His publications are deficient in vigour, nor can they be said to evince an exuberance of original thought in the author, or force the profitable labour of thinking upon the reader. Yet they are always serious, respectable, and useful. The "Exposition of the New Testament," which is his principal performance, must have cost him much; for he has interwoven a new translation into his paraphrase, and been unsparing of the labour which the harmony of the evangelists requires. The improvements are not ingenious, but devotional, and sometimes dull, sometimes ardent; while his notes frequently furnish valuable criticisms. The first excellence of an expositor, a clear perception of the mind of the Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, presented in language which renders it impossible to be misapprehended or overlooked,

must not be ascribed to Doddridge. He often attempts to include so many senses, that he virtually gives none. His sermons are judicious, calculated to edify rather than produce Christians, but always aiming at the benefit of the audience not the display of the preacher. "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," is a book of such excellencies and defects, as render it equally hazardous to praise or blame. The plan risks the production of a mechanical religion, which moves obsequious to the patent machine; yet the author has worked well upon a bad plan, and though the man who did not understand the religion of the Gospel, would be in danger of forming a false notion of it from this book, one who already understands it, must be eminent indeed if he did not find the perusal greatly to his advantage. Dr. Doddridge must find a place, if not the highest, among sacred poets. Some of his hymns are superior, and his epigram upon the motto of his family arms, is pronounced, by Dr. Johnson, the best in the English language.

MOSES LOWMAN.

His father was educated at Cambridge for the church, but afterwards betook himself to a secular employment. This son, who was born in 1680, was designed for the bar, but left the inns of court to study theology for the dissenting ministry. With this view he went over to Holland; in 1699, and spent some years under the tuition of De Uries and Witsius, the one eminent as a metaphysician, the other as a divine. On his return to England he was, in 1710, chosen assistant to Mr. Grace, minister of a presbyterian congregation at Clapham. Four years

afterwards he was ordained pastor of the flock. In this situation he continued, till within a few weeks of his death, which took place in 1752, in the seventy-third year of his age. Dr. Chandler, who preached his funeral sermon, says, "his morals and integrity were unblameable. Here neither calumny could defame, and suspicion herself had nothing to suggest. He lived honoured, useful, and beloved. He met his dissolution with a well-grounded comfort and hope."

Mr. Lowman was a man of considerable abilities, who by incessant study amassed an ample treasure both of divine and human literature. He appeared as an advocate for Christianity against Collins, the deist, in a small treatise, entitled, "the Argument from Prophecy in proof that Jesus is the Messiah vindicated," in which he stated with great ability the evidence from prophecy in favour of the Gospel of Christ. His "Dissertation on the civil Government of the Hebrews," which he composed in answer to the objections of Morgan against the Jewish dispensation, is a very valuable work. The same character is justly due to his "Rationale of the Ritual of the Hebrew Worship." He gained also a large portion of well-earned fame by his "Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation of St. John." A few single sermons appeared from his pen. Great praise is given to a small piece published without his name, entitled, "an Argument to prove the Unity and Perfection of God *a priori*." A volume containing three tracts was published by his friends after his death.

While Mr. Lowman claims a high degree of commendation as a writer, there is none due to him as a preacher. An intelligent man, who was his constant hearer, declared that he could never understand him.

In the few sermons which he published, there is something remarkably awkward, rugged, and clumsy, and very little calculated to attract the attention of an audience. It is painful to be obliged to find fault with a man who is an able writer, because he is a bad preacher, but for such a fault severe reprehension is due. If the strength of the person's mind is given to his writings; and his discourses for the pulpit are prepared in a hurried and slovenly manner, can it be said that he watches for souls as one that must give an account?

DR. FOSTER.

This divine, whose name is familiar to all who are acquainted with the history of pulpit oratory, was a native of Exeter. His grandfather was a clergyman at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, but his father, who was a fuller, became a dissenter by means of an uncle. This son was born September 16, 1697, and sent at five years of age to the free school in Exeter, of which he became the ornament and glory. He removed to the academy of the elder Mr. Hallet, and began to preach with great applause in the year 1718. In the controversy which then unhappily raged, he adopted the arian creed, though he at last settled in what may be denominated low socinianism. According to the strange practice of those days, he was invited by an orthodox congregation at Milborne Port, in Somersetshire, to be their pastor; but his sentiments soon proved so disagreeable to them, that he withdrew to an obscure retreat under the Mendip Hills. While here, he preached to two poor congregations, of which the united salaries were only fifteen pounds per annum.

He published, as the fruit of his retirement, in 1720,

“ an Essay on Fundamentals, with a particular Regard to the Doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity,” designed to prove that the belief of this truth is not essential to salvation. He came forth from his obscure retreat to preach at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, though here his congregation did not consist of more than twenty or thirty persons. The change, which now took place in his sentiments by his becoming a baptist, created no difference between him and his little flock ; but as the support, which they were able to afford him, was quite inadequate to his wants, he entertained some thoughts of quitting the ministry, and is said to have actually deliberated on learning of the person with whom he boarded, the trade of a glover. From this he was diverted by the friendship of Robert Houlton, esq. who took him into his house as his chaplain. A pamphlet, supposed to be written by a clergyman, attacked his essay, and pronounced a curse on his patron for receiving him into his house, and bidding him God speed.

Mr. Foster removed to London in 1724, to succeed Dr. Gale, as co-pastor with Mr. Joseph Burroughs, in the general baptist congregation, Barbican. This office he held for more than twenty years, and at the same time carried on an evening lecture on the Lord's-day at the Old Jewry, with such popularity as was before unparalleled among dissenters. “ Here was a confluence of persons of every rank, station, and quality. Wits, free-thinkers, numbers of clergy, who, while they gratified their curiosity, had their prepossessions shaken, and their prejudices loosened.”

“ As Pope has celebrated him in the following couplet of the epilogue to his satires—

“ Let modest Foster, if he will, excell,
Ten metropolitans in preaching well,”

In the year 1731, he published an answer to the deistical pamphlet, entitled, "Christianity as old as the Creation," of which even Tindal his antagonist spoke with great respect. He afterwards printed four volumes of sermons, one of which engaged him in a controversy concerning heresy, with Dr. Henry Stebbing, one of the king's chaplains, and preacher to the society in Gray's Inn^x.

At the end of the year 1744, he succeeded Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, as pastor of the independent congregation at Pinner's-hall, and two years after, was called to the melancholy task of attending the earl of Kilmarnock in the Tower under sentence of death for high treason^y.

it has been concluded that curiosity drew the poet to hear the orator. His sudden and unusual popularity is said to have been occasioned, as popularity often is, by an accidental circumstance. An eminent physician, happening to go into his meeting-house for shelter from a shower of rain, was so fascinated that he stood the whole of the time, and ever afterwards spoke of him in all companies as an incomparable preacher.

^x The wits of the day, who loved to say smart things on subjects which they did not care to understand, diverted themselves with the charge of heresy, by saying, "Stebbing was a heretic to God, and Foster to the church."

^y After accompanying him to the scaffold, he published "an Account of the Behaviour of the late earl of Kilmarnock after his Sentence, and on the Day of his Execution." To this Mr. Malachi Blake, a dissenting minister, at Blandford, in Dorsetshire, published an answer, entitled, "Kilmarnock's Ghost;" in which he contended that the unfortunate earl had not been faithfully instructed and warned. Nor could it be expected that one who rejected the divinity, atonement, and imputed righteousness of Christ, as well as the influences of the Holy Spirit, would give such advice as those who deemed these truths essential to a sinner's eternal hopes, would think suited to the awful circumstances in which the earl and his last adviser were placed.

The Marischal college, Aberdeen, in 1748, conferred on Mr. Foster the degree of D. D. But his spirits were now declining, and he was removed by a palsy to give an account to the Author of Revelation for his reception of its doctrines, November 5, 1753, in his fifty-seventh year².

His integrity was unimpeached, and the force of his attachment to nonconformity is set beyond suspicion by the design he had formed of entering on a course of manual labour for his subsistence, rather than conform to the establishment, into which he had been invited by those who could have procured him preferment. His popularity as a preacher is said to have been well supported by a fine commanding voice, accompanied with an intrepidity in avowing his sentiments, which all ought to imitate. Error is never more dangerous than when it walks in disguise. Though he was charged with deism by some who could not distinguish between his negative creed, and complete infidelity, he ever protested that he was a firm believer in Revelation, and despised the meanness of professing Christianity without conviction.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Mr. Bradbury was one of those men of ardent temperament, who will always procure distinction among their contemporaries, and when born for eventful times will seldom fail to acquire for themselves a posthumous celebrity. He entered on the stage of life in 1677,

² It has been said that at his funeral, one of his admirers exclaimed, "there is a good man gone to glory." To which a grave old lady, who stood by, replied, "but he has taken away my Lord, and I know not where he has laid him."

at Wakefield, in Yorkshire. His father was a member of the church at Alverthorp, near that town, of which Mr. Peter Naylor, an ejected minister, was pastor. Under his care, and at the free-school at Leeds, he received the first rudiments of learning. His memory was so tenacious, that Mr. Naylor and his father used to send him to a public house in Wakefield (where one newspaper was read aloud for the public), to hear and report to them, before he himself understood that a man-of-war meant a ship. This he did with such accuracy, that (though afraid to appear, Mr. Naylor having been often imprisoned) they sufficiently learned the state of public affairs. His *alma mater* was the academy of Mr. Jollie, at Attercliffe, where some of the first dignitaries of the church of England received their education for the ministry. Several anecdotes of Mr. Bradbury, while a student, are yet retained in the social circle. He began to preach at the early age of eighteen, about the year 1696, when his juvenile appearance induced one of the country congregation which he was about to address, to say to him, "pray, master, do you know who is going to preach to-day?" On finding that he was to be the preacher, the person expressed, at least by his countenance, so much dissatisfaction that it extremely discomposed this young Timothy, who mounted the pulpit for the first time with extreme timidity, perceiving that the apostolic injunction had not prevented men from "despising his youth." He soon, however, rose above his fears, and convinced his hearers that he was a boy only in appearance. He used afterwards to relate this anecdote with the remark, "I bless God from that hour I have never known the fear of man." He soon after left the academy, and was taken into the

family of Mr. Whitaker, a minister of great ability, piety, and property at Leeds, who matured his judgment, checked his ardour, and directed his views. Here he preached but seldom. In 1697, he went to Beverley, though not as a candidate, and continued there two years, when he became assistant to Dr. Gilpin, at Newcastle upon Tyne, where he continued three years with almost unbounded popularity. He then removed to Stepney, near London. Here Mr. Tong became his kind director, and prudent, faithful friend. He always, though not in an unscriptural sense, called him his master. But such was his regard for Mr. Whitaker, that as long as he lived, Mr. Bradbury annually went to Leeds to preach for him, and hear him. In his progress, he always preached at Sheffield, where, as well as at Leeds, the people heard him with delight. He was chosen in 1707, to succeed Mr. Benoni Rowe, whom death had removed from his pastoral care of the church in Fetter-lane, London. Here he soon enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the place filled and the church increase; for his talents were admirably adapted to the meridian of the metropolis. But after near twenty years of prosperity, an unhappy altercation disturbed the harmony and at length dissolved the union between Mr. Bradbury and his flock.

The neighbouring church at New-court, Carey-street, over which Daniel Burgess had presided, being at this time destitute, immediately invited Mr. Bradbury to take the charge of them, to which he readily consented; so that but one Sabbath intervened between the close of his labours at Fetter-lane, and the commencement of them at Carey-street. Those among his former flock who espoused his cause,

followed him to this new and contiguous scene of labour, and on November 27, 1728, a solemn union was formed between the church at New-court, and the numerous secession from Fetter-lane, under the pastoral care of Thomas Bradbury, and the assistant ministry of his brother Peter Bradbury. While the popular talents of the pastor increased the flock, his interest, together with that of his brother among the opulent citizens, enabled the society to discharge the debt for building, which had long been a heavy burden.

This pulpit a second time presented a phenomenon as rare as it is beneficial, wit consecrated to the service of serious and eternal truth. The talent of Bradbury indeed was more cutting, that of Burgess more facetious: the latter aimed to recommend grave subjects by smiling pleasantries, the former loved to shame noxious errors by stinging sarcasm. Many anecdotes are related of the manner in which Bradbury employed his peculiar talent to promote the cause in which he had embarked*. The courage and animation which wit demands, diffused an interesting vivacity through his public services, and his perfect command of scriptural language served to keep up

* His repartee at court has been already noticed, but his religious as well as his political ardour often called in the aid of his wit. During the arian controversy, at a general meeting of the ministers of London at Salter's-hall, he had been contending that those who really believed the doctrine of Christ's divinity should openly avow it: when, to bring it to the test, he said, "you, who are not ashamed to own the deity of our Lord, follow me into the gallery." He had scarcely mounted two or three steps before the opposite party hissed him, when turning round, he said, "I have been pleading for him who bruised the serpent's head, no wonder the seed of the serpent should hiss."

the high tone of sanctity which had otherwise been debased by satirical witticism.

After presiding over the church in New-court, Carey-street, two and thirty years, he died September 9, 1750, aged eighty-two. He left two daughters, one of whom was married, in 1744, to John Winter, esq. whose brother, the Rev. Richard Winter, succeeded Mr. Bradbury, and who was again succeeded, after a short interval, by his nephew Dr. Robert Winter, grandson to Mr. Thomas Bradbury. The other daughter was married, in 1768, to George Welch, esq. banker, in London. The talents and consideration of Mr. Bradbury among dissenters brought him forward on public occasions to present addresses to the throne, and "Mr. Grainger saw a friendly letter from archbishop Wake to him, which was part of a correspondence between the metropolitan of all England, and him whom the continuator of Grainger calls improperly the patriarch of the dissenters^b." The same writer has in his tissue of inaccuracies concerning Mr. Bradbury, greatly exaggerated his fortune, which, whatever it was, came by the lady whom he married, whose name was Richmond.

His character has been given to posterity with various degrees of light and shade. "In private," says Noble, "he was the social pleasant companion, and more famed for his mirth than long harangues." The manuscript account of the London ministers says, "had he as much judgment as quickness of wit, and as much temper as zeal, he would have been a man of much greater consideration. His usefulness has been much abated since the Salter's-hall synod ;

^b Continuation of Grainger, vol. III. p. 139.

for though he has been warm on the orthodox side, his ill-conducted zeal has done mischief. He made it his business not only from his own pulpit, but at the Pinner's-hall lecture, to lampoon and satirize the performances of Dr. Watts, and amongst others his hymns and psalms, for which many Christians and churches have reason to bless God." Thomas Bradbury, however, was not the only friend of the Gospel who was prejudiced against the doctor's devotional poetry, and alarmed at the supposed consequences of introducing it into the dissenting worship. As to the spirit with which he levelled the shafts of his wit; it should be remembered that, far from despising the decencies of life, in which he was truly accomplished, he could well bear with those who honestly avowed their dissent from his opinion, but emptied all his formidable quiver on those whom he termed trimmers and shufflers. He was, indeed, according to the opinion of the celebrated Roman, a well-educated man, for he knew how to say no; and it will be to his everlasting honour that he was perfectly free from the sins of the times, disingenuousness in the concealment of error, or treacherous shrinking from the defence of truth. He was himself aware that his honest zeal should have been accompanied with more suavity of manner^c.

^c An anecdote, communicated by his grandson Dr. Robert Winter will interest our readers. His ardent zeal exposed Mr. B. to the hatred of papists as well as tories. The former employed a person to take away his life. To make himself fully acquainted with Bradbury's person, the man frequently attended at places of worship where he preached, placed himself in the front of the gallery, with his countenance steadily fixed on the preacher. It was scarcely possible in such circumstances wholly to avoid listening to what was said. Mr. B.'s forcible manner of presenting divine

Five sermons on the Christian's joy in finishing his course, is said to be his most finished work. "Christus in Cœlo, or Discourses on the Work of a glorified Saviour," is mentioned as his first publication. His "Sermons on the Mystery of Godliness," are too much founded on the vulgar error which regards the word mystery in Scripture as exactly equivalent to the same word in common use.

The larger memoirs, given of those ministers who have occupied this section, were due to their distinguished worth or eminent station, but should by no means exclude from notice or esteem many to whom we can afford no more space than is occupied by their names. Among the churches in London, the first rank of respectability was assigned to Benjamin Grosvenor, Robert Trail, John Nesbitt, John Hurriou, Robert Bragg, John and Thomas Newman, Joshua Bayes, Dr. Hughes, John Sladen, Joseph Stennett, Richard Rawlin, Samuel Price, Timothy Jollie, John Astie, Martin Tomkins, John Hill, Richard Lardner, Thomas Cotton, Robert Fleming, John Cumming, and Timothy Rogers. In the country, the most eminent ministers were Risdon Darracott, of Wellington; David Some, of Market Harborough; Thomas Saunders, of Kettering; John Spilsbury, of Kidderminster; John Sloss, of Nottingham; William Nolent, of Ipswich; John Bert, of St. Edmund's

truth to view, awakened the man's attention, entered his understanding, and became the means of changing his heart. He came to the preacher with trembling and confusion, told his affecting tale, gave evidence of his conversion, became a member of the church, and was to the hour of his death an ornament to the Gospel which he professed.

Bury; John Norman, of Portsmouth; Mr. Kentish, Mr. Perry, and Bernard Foskett, of Bristol; William Moth, of Basingstoke; to whom may be added a zealous defender of dissenting principles Samuel Bourn, of Birmingham. With a mixture of pleasure and regret we apologize for a mere catalogue of names, by observing, that the eminent ministers of this period were too numerous to admit them all to a distinct memoir.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

- Page 116, line 20, for *Bolingbrooke*, read *Bolingbroke*.
 153, 21, for *than*, read *then*.
 171, 11, for *Mr. Larn*, read *Mr. Some*.
 213, 2 from bottom, for *spirits*, read *spirit*.
 303, 21, for *sinceri*, read *suiceri*.
 317, 13, for *least*, read *last*.
 334, 6, for *where*, read *whose*.
 413, after line 21 insert *Section I. Lives of eminent ministers*.

